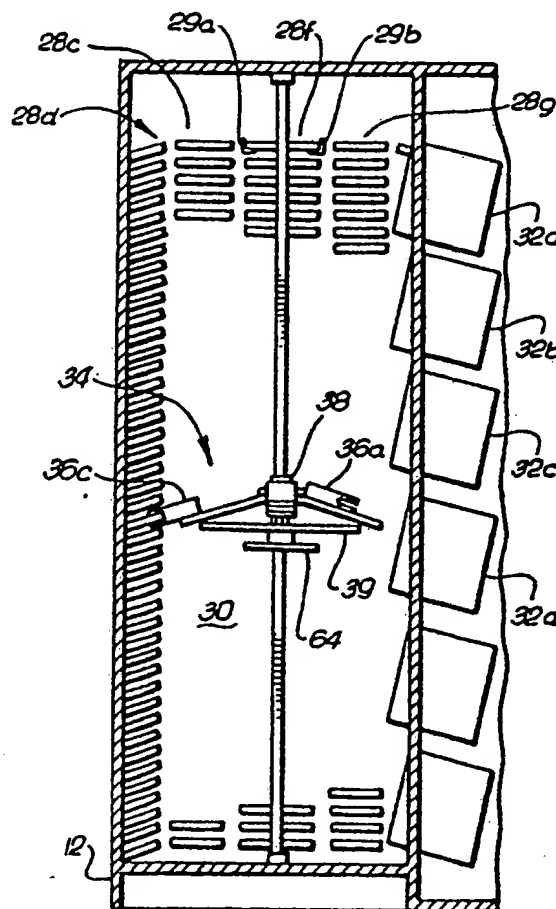


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(54) Title: ROBOTIC MATERIALS HANDLING SYSTEM**(57) Abstract**

A robotic materials handling system for storing and handling box-like articles such as videocassettes includes a storage area (12) containing a plurality of columns (28 a-g) of storage bins, a vertical support shaft (40) located adjacent the storage area and a manipulator assembly (34) carried on the shaft. The manipulator assembly includes a plurality of gripper mechanisms (36) which may be positioned adjacent desired storage bins. The system includes computer control circuitry (202) for controlling the operation of the manipulator assembly and gripper mechanism to transport articles between desired locations.



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ROBOTIC MATERIALS HANDLING SYSTEM

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a robotic materials handling system for storing and handling box-like articles. More particularly, the present invention relates to a robotic system for rapidly and reliably handling videocassettes in an automated cassette sequencing system. In such a system, plural tape transports are provided and the handling system automatically loads videocassettes into the transports for sequential playing of programs contained in the cassettes. Such systems are in common use in television broadcasting in which a number of programs, or "spots", are played during a typical commercial interruption.

2. Description of the Prior Art

In most prior art sequencing systems, cartridges containing videotape are held on a carousel which is moved to position the desired cartridge at a tape transport unit for loading. Such systems are relatively complex and expensive to maintain.

A recently developed system incorporates a stationary column of storage bins for holding cassettes and automatic elevator system that loads designated cassettes into specific transports at the time required. The capacity of the system is limited to forty videocassettes. Although this system provides several advantages over earlier systems, it is limited in its ability to adequately store and handle a large number of videocassettes.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to a robotics materials handling system for storing and handling box-like articles such as videocassettes in applications
5 where speed and reliability are critical. The invention provides a storage area containing a plurality of columns of storage bins, and an article manipulator coupled to a shaft located adjacent the storage area. The manipulator assembly includes one or more arm
10 assemblies having a gripper mechanism which is movable radially with respect to the support shaft. The manipulator assembly is also vertically movable along the shaft and movable either rotatably or translationally so that the gripper mechanism can be
15 positioned adjacent each storage bin. In the preferred embodiment of the invention, the storage area includes a plurality of columns of storage bins located about a circle, and a manipulator assembly is rotatable about the support shaft to position the gripper mechanism in
20 line with the desired column. Preferably, a number of gripper mechanisms are included so as to provide increased speed of operation and increased reliability. The manipulator assembly is preferably microprocessor controlled, which provides optimum operation of the
25 mechanical components of the system.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The invention will be described with reference to the accompanying drawings, wherein:

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a cartridge
5 handling and sequencing system incorporating the handling system of the present invention;

Figure 2 is a top plan diagrammatic view of the handling system of the present invention;

Figure 3 is a sectional view along lines 3-3 of
10 Figure 2 showing the arrangement of the storage library of the present invention;

Figure 4 is a block diagram of the videocassette sequencing and handling system which with the present invention is employed;

15 Figure 5 is a perspective view of the manipulator assembly of the present invention;

Figure 6 is a top plan view taken along lines 6-6 of Figure 5;

Figure 7 is a sectional view of the manipulator
20 assembly taken along line 7-7 of Figure 6;

Figure 8 is a sectional view of the manipulator assembly taken along lines 8-8 of Figure 7;

Figure 9 is a sectional view of the manipulator assembly taken along lines 9-9 of Figure 6;

25 Figure 10 is a sectional view of the manipulator assembly taken along lines 10-10 of Figure 7;

Figure 11 is a perspective view of the slide and gripper mechanism of the present invention;

Figure 12 is a sectional view of the slide and
30 gripper mechanism;

Figure 13 is a top view of the gripper mechanism taken along lines 13-13 of Figure 12; and

Figure 14 is a block diagram of the control system of the manipulator assembly of the present
35 invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

The following description is of the best presently contemplated mode of carrying out the invention. This description is made for the purpose of illustrating the general principles of the invention, and is not to be taken in a limiting sense. In particular, although the invention is described with reference to a videocassette handling system, the invention may be utilized in other applications where box-like articles are to be stored and handled. The scope of the invention is best determined by reference to the appended claims.

Referring to Figure 1, a videocassette sequencing system is comprised of a main housing 10 including an octagonal library portion 12, a videotape transport and electronics section 14 and a monitoring section 16. The library section is hinged at 18 so as to allow access to its interior for servicing. The library section is configured to store approximately three hundred videocassettes. The electronics section 14 includes a plurality of videocassette transports and associated electronics. The monitoring section 16 includes a pair of stereo speakers 20 for audio monitoring, a video monitor 22 and a waveform monitor/vector scope 24. The operation of the system is controlled by means of a computer 26 which in the present embodiment is a personal computer including a control keyboard and a monitor.

Referring to Figures 2 and 3, the configuration of the library section 12 will be described. The library includes seven columns 28a-g of cassette storage bins, with each bin being slightly inclined so as to aid in the retention of videocassettes. Each bin is formed of side L-shaped sections 29a and 29b as illustrated in Figure 3, thus leaving the top and bottom of a videocassette stored in a bin exposed. In the present embodiment of the invention, each column includes forty-three individual storage bins, with the library 12 thus containing a total of three hundred and one storage

bins. The columns 28a-g are arranged in a circular fashion, with one column being located on each of seven sides of the octagonal housing. The columns thus surround a central space 30.

5 A column of four videocassette transports 32a-d is located on the eighth side of the library housing. The transports 32 are substantially the same distance from the axial center of the space 30 as are the storage bins 28. The transports 32 and associated electronics
10 may be playback only, or may be record/playback to facilitate dubbing of videocassettes.

The manipulator assembly of the present invention is contained within the central space 30 and is identified generally at 34. The manipulator includes
15 four cassette gripper mechanisms 36a-d carried on a hub assembly 38 and circuit board 39, both of which are rotatable and vertically movable with respect to a central vertical shaft 40 coincident with the longitudinal axis of the central space 30. The gripper
20 mechanisms are spaced at angles which are integral multiples of the angular spacing of the columns of storage bins, so that the gripper mechanisms may operate simultaneously. A bar code reader 42 is also attached to the circuit board assembly 39.

25 The cassette manipulator assembly 34 transports cassettes between various storage bins and between storage bins and the cassette transport units under control of the computer 26. Cassettes to be entered into the library 12 are inserted via an access port 44
30 (Figure 1) which exposes a portion of the column of storage bins 28a. Each of the exposed bins includes an associated cassette sensor for detecting when a cassette is inserted into it, with a sensor 46 for one of the bins being indicated in Figure 1. The sensor may be a
35 mechanical sensor, optical sensor or other type of sensor which can function to provide a detection signal when a cassette is inserted into a storage bin. Since the bins at the access opening are exposed at their lower side, they are provided with springs for retaining videocassettes inserted into them.

Cassettes to be removed from the system are provided by the manipulator 34 to a second access opening 48 (Figure 1) located below the opening 44. In normal operation, all cassettes contained in the library
5 will be entered through the access opening 44 and subsequently removed through the access opening 48. With this configuration, the operation of the system is greatly simplified, since there is no requirement of physical access to all the storage bins of the library
10 during normal operation.

Figure 4 is a block diagram of the videocassette handling and sequencing system. The system operates to access a series of cassettes from the library, load them into the transports 32 and play them consecutively in
15 the desired order. The cassettes are then returned by the manipulator 34 to storage bins which may be in the main library for storage or adjacent the access opening 48 for cassettes that are to be removed from the library. The system is described in detail in U.S.
20 Patent Application No. 720,591, filed concurrently with this application.

The computer 26 includes a main controller 26a and terminal 26b and associated printer 60. The main controller provides commands to a manipulator controller
25 50 and a sequence controller 52. The sequence controller 52 controls the operation of the transport units 32 (via interface circuitry 54) and signal processing circuitry 56. The sequencing aspect of the videocassette system does not form a part of the present
30 invention and will not be described in detail.

The manipulator controller 50 is a microprocessor-based controller which provides commands to the manipulator 34 and decodes information from the bar code scanner 42 and sensors 46. The bar code scanner
35 42 is used to read a bar code contained on a label of each videocassette entered into the system. The main controller 26a is programmed to include data regarding every cassette in general use in the system, e.g., all of the cassettes in general use in a television station.

As a cassette is entered into the library 12 via the access opening 44, a loading sensor 46 associated with the storage bin into which the cassette is located provides a detection signal to the manipulator

5 controller 50. The controller 50 automatically actuates the cassette manipulator 34 to move the cassette from the loading bin to a storage bin within the library 12. Prior to the grasping of the cassette by the manipulator, the bar code on the cassette is read by
10 means of the bar code scanner 42. The scanned code is decoded by the manipulator controller 50 and provided to the main controller 26a. The controller 26a in turn instructs the manipulator controller 50 to cause the cassette manipulator to deposit the cassette in a
15 selected storage bin. The main controller 26a maintains a cross reference of each cassette (based upon the scanned bar code) with a storage location within the library 12.

In operation, the main controller 26a may be
20 programmed by providing it with a time sequential list (log) of cassettes to be played. The controller 26a contains data regarding the location of every cassette in the library 12. In executing the play list, the main controller 26a will send commands both to the
25 manipulator controller 50 and the sequence controller 52 based upon the play list and the time of day. For example, in preparation for a station break the main controller 26a will command the manipulator controller 50 to load the first four cassettes into the transport
30 units 32 and command the sequence controller to play the cassettes in a desired order. The sequence controller 52 is then readied to accept an external cue to begin a break.

As the break progresses, the main controller 26a
35 continuously monitors the status of the sequence controller 52. When additional cassettes are required the appropriate commands are sent to the manipulator controller 50 and when additional sequences are required the appropriate commands are sent to the sequence

controller 52. In this fashion, the main controller 26a maintains the current state of the machine by ensuring that the transport units 32 are loaded with the required cassettes and the sequence controller 52 is programmed
5 with the next required sequence.

The cassette manipulator 34 is illustrated in detail in Figures 5-13. For purposes of clarity, the gripper 36b, circuit board assembly 39 and bar code reader 42 have been omitted from Figure 5. The
10 manipulator assembly 34 includes a rotatable hub assembly 38 to which the gripper assemblies are coupled and a stationary bearing assembly including a top circular plate 62, lower circuit board 64 (also shown in Figure 1) and a sprocket assembly 120. The bearing
15 assembly is supported for vertical movement along the square shaft 40 by means of four V-groove rollers 66 secured to the plate 62 as illustrated in Figures 6, 7 and 9 and four V-groove rollers 68 secured to a lower bearing plate 70 as shown in Figures 7 and 9. A central
20 tubular slip ring collar 72 forms the remainder of the bearing portion and is interconnected to the elements 70 and 62 by means of pins 73 and 75 (Figures 8 and 10). The inner diameter of the collar 72 is greater than the diagonal extent of the shaft 40, and the rollers 66 and
25 68 are the only portion of the manipulator assembly which contact the shaft 40. It should be noted that the V-groove rollers 66 and 68 are spring-loaded as illustrated at 74 in Figure 6 to bias them toward the shaft 40, thereby rendering the bearing assembly
30 self-aligning.

The shaft 40 is coupled at its top and bottom to frame members 76 and 78 (Figure 5) which form a part of the main frame of the library 12. The manipulator assembly 34 is driven along the shaft 40 by means of a
35 stepper motor 80 attached to an additional frame section 82 just below the section 78. The stepper motor drives the manipulator assembly 34 by means of a belt 84 which is attached to the upper plate 62 at 86 and to the lower bearing element 70 at 88 (Figure 7). The belt 84 is

looped through the hollow shaft 40 so as to avoid the necessity of passing through the manipulator assembly. A pair of pulleys 90 at the top of the shaft 40 support the belt 84. In order to monitor the position of the manipulator assembly along the shaft, a precision potentiometer 92 driven by one of the pulleys 90 is provided. This potentiometer provides a coarse indication of the position of the manipulator assembly 34. In addition, an optical sensor 94 (Figure 5) comprised of a photodiode array is secured to the bottom element 70 and provides fine position feedback by sensing position markings 96 along the shaft 40. The position feedback from the potentiometer 92 and sensor 94 are used to control the positioning of the manipulator 34 in a manner to be described.

A counterweight 98 is coupled to the manipulator assembly 34 by means of a cable 100 which is looped over pulleys 102 and 104 and attached to a ring 106 secured to the top plate 62. By including the counterweight 98, the motor 80 need only overcome the mass of the manipulator assembly and the counterweight, i.e., the force of gravity need not be overcome.

A cylindrical hub unit 108 (Figures 7 and 9) surrounds and is rotatable with respect to the slip ring collar 72. The hub is spaced from the collar 72 by means of upper and lower non-rotating rings 110 and 112 which are secured to the collar 72. A D.C. motor 114 is attached to the hub unit 108 by means of a bracket 116. The motor drives a gear 118 which engages a sprocket 120 secured to the lower bearing element 70. This structure is shown in Figures 8 and 9. When the motor 114 is driven, the gear 118 rotates to drive the motor and gear around the sprocket 120, thus resulting in rotation of the hub assembly 108. The gripper assemblies 36 are attached to the hub assembly at an extension 108a (Figure 7) and therefore rotate with the hub assembly.

The rotational position of the hub assembly is controlled by means of optical feedback and positive detent positioning. As illustrated in Figure 10, the

top plate 62 includes radial positioning marks 122 formed around a periphery of its lower surface. These marks are sensed by an optical sensor 124, which is shown most clearly in Figure 6. As the hub assembly rotates, the marks are counted to provide position feedback. When the desired position has been reached, final positioning is achieved by means of a solenoid 126 (Figures 6 and 9), the beveled plunger of which extends into one of a plurality of holes 62a formed in the top plate 62. Both the optical sensor 124 and solenoid 126 are secured to the hub element 108 by means of a bracket 128. The holes 62a are located to precisely position a gripper assembly in front of a column of storage bins or the column of transport units. The detent mechanism employed enables a rotational accuracy of better than one degree to be achieved. This positional accuracy helps to prevent any jamming of the mechanism.

As shown in Figure 9, the main circuit board 39 (illustrated in phantom) is carried on a surface 108b of the hub unit 108. The motor 114 passes through an opening 39a in the circuit board and serves to rotationally fix the position of the circuit board. The circuit board contains a major portion of the manipulator electronics, including microprocessor circuitry. Since components on the circuit board 39 must communicate with additional portions of the system away from the manipulator assembly 34, some form of data link is required. Since the circuit board 39 rotates with the hub assembly, a cable connection cannot be employed since it would wrap around the shaft 40. The present invention employs a unique infrared communications chamber for transmitting data to the manipulator assembly 34.

Data signals from the portion of the system remote from the manipulator (e.g., the main controller 26a and a portion of the manipulator controller 50) are provided to the lower circuit board 64 by means of a cable 130 (Figure 5) which is coiled to accommodate the vertical motion of the manipulator assembly. The

electrical data signals are converted to infrared signals by an infrared transmitter 132 (Figure 7) and transmitted into a chamber 134 defined by channels in the facing portions of the bottom bearing element 70 and the hub element 108. These elements are formed of machined aluminum and the surface of the chamber 134 is thus relatively reflective. Signals transmitted by the transmitter 132 will reflect within the chamber and will ultimately be received by an infrared receiver 136 located in the hub unit 108. Thus, data signals can be transferred from the stationary bearing section 70 to the rotating hub section 108. Similarly, signals can be transferred from the hub section to the bearing section by means of a transmitter 138 and receiver 140. As shown in Figure 8, a plurality of transmitters 140 are employed to ensure that the transmitted signals are properly received. Similarly, a plurality of transmitters 136 may be provided in the hub section 108. In order to permit simultaneous bidirectional data communications, signals transmitted from the bearing section 70 to the hub section 108 may be transmitted at a first frequency and signals transmitted from the hub section 108 to the bearing section 70 may be transmitted at a second frequency. After reception by the receivers at either side, the infrared signals are converted to electrical signals and transmitted to the appropriate components.

In addition to the transmission of data signals, power signals must be provided to the manipulator assembly to power the motors and other electronic components contained on the manipulator assembly. This is accomplished by means of a slip ring structure illustrated in Figures 7 and 9. The power signals are also delivered to the lower circuit board by means of the coiled cord 130. These signals are then coupled to metal slip rings 142 which surround the bearing element 172. The slip rings are contacted by brushes 144 carried by the hub unit 108. Power signals are then transferred from the brushes 144 to appropriate components on the manipulator assembly.

Details of the gripper assemblies 36 are shown in Figures 11-13. Each gripper assembly 36 is supported on a rail assembly 150. The gripper 35 includes a bottom platform 152 to which are secured three V-groove rollers 5 154, 156 and 158. These rollers contact protruding edges of the rail assembly 150 and enable the gripper mechanism 36 to slide along the rail. The rollers 156 and 158 are spring-biased toward the rail assembly similar to the rollers on the main bearing assembly, so 10 that the gripper is self-aligning with respect to the rail assembly.

The gripper is driven along the rails by means of a timing belt 160 contained within the rail assembly 150. The gripper assembly is coupled to the belt by 15 means of a bracket 162, and the belt is driven by a DC motor 164. The gripper per se is formed by a top plate 168 and a flat berilium copper spring 170. A two-position DC motor 172 drives the spring 170 from an open to a closed position by means of an eccentrically 20 mounted circular cam 174. A pair of switches 176 are employed to detect when a cassette has been seated in the gripper assembly.

As can be seen in Figure 12, when it is desired to grasp a cassette 180 contained in a storage bin 28, 25 the motor 172 is activated to open the gripper and the motor 164 is then driven to move the gripper forward to the end of the rail assembly 150. Upon detection of proper seating of the cassette 180 by means of the switches 176, the motor 172 is activated to close the 30 gripper to grasp the cassette. The motor 164 is then driven to retract the gripper 36 and remove the cassette 180 from the bin 28. The manipulator assembly may then be moved vertically and/or rotationally to transfer the cassette to the desired location. In order to monitor 35 the position of the gripper along the slide, an optical sensor 182 is provided to read marks 184 located along the slide. In addition, an optical sensor assembly 186 may be provided to monitor the position of the motor 172.

The manner of control of the manipulator assembly will be described with reference to Figure 14 of the drawings.

When a cassette is to be transported, the main
5 controller 26a provides an instruction on line 200 to a
manipulator control processor 202 instructing it to
fetch a cassette from a particular location (e.g.,
storage bin or tape transport) and deliver it to a
destination location. The control processor 202 has
10 knowledge of the current position of the manipulator by
means of the optical sensor 94 (for vertical position)
and 124 (for rotational position). The control
processor sends commands to a velocity profile generator
and driver 204 to drive the stepper motor 80 to control
15 the vertical positioning of the manipulator assembly 34.
Coarse feedback is provided by the potentiometer 92 and
fine feedback is provided by the sensor 94 to the
velocity profile generator. The velocity profile
generator is a microprocessor-based system that
20 generates a velocity signal as a function of the
position of the manipulator assembly to cause the
assembly to reach the desired location in the shortest
amount of time. Similarly, a velocity profile generator
and driver 206 drives the DC servo motor 114 to rotate
25 the hub assembly to the desired orientation. When the
final destination is reached, the solenoid 126 will be
seated in an opening 62a in the top plate 62.

The position of the manipulator assembly is
monitored by the control processor 202 to determine when
30 its desired vertical and rotational positions have been
reached, as indicated by the optical sensor 94 and
solenoid 126. When this occurs, the control processor
202 instructs one or more velocity profile generators
and drivers 208 to drive an associated servo motor 164
35 and gripper 36 forward along the slide assembly 150.
Once the cassette has been contacted properly as
indicated by the sensor switches 176, the control
processor 202 activates a driver 210 to drive the
gripper motor 172 and rotate the gripper spring cam 174.

The gripper is then retracted by means of the motor 164 and the manipulator assembly is rotated and moved vertically to the destination location. The gripper is then again moved forward and the spring cam rotated so
5 as to release the videocassette.

The velocity profile generators 204, 206 and 208 are all microprocessor-based systems which generate an optimum velocity profile for a particular distance to be traveled in order to achieve the most rapid and accurate
10 motion. In the case of the velocity profile generators 208, different conditions will be encountered in operation depending upon whether a cassette is in the gripper and whether the cassette is to be removed or delivered from a storage bin or tape transport. In
15 order to achieve optimum performance, both in terms of speed and reliability, a different velocity profile is generated depending on the operation to be carried out. In the present embodiment of the invention, the control processor 202 selects from among eight different
20 velocity profiles contained in the velocity profile generators 208 to correspond to eight different operational conditions. In addition, each velocity profile generator 208 can be independently controlled, i.e., they may simultaneously generate different
25 velocity profiles. Thus, the optimum profile may be selected for each gripper even if more than one gripper is being operated at a time.

In summary, the present invention provides a unique article storage and handling system including a
30 storage library and a manipulator assembly. The manipulator assembly is extremely reliable and fast. The use of multiple gripper assemblies substantially increases the speed of transfer operations. In addition, it provides built-in redundancy, thereby
35 increasing the reliability of the system. The unique control of the gripper assemblies further increases the operational capabilities of the system.

What is Claimed is:

1. A robotic materials handling system for storing and handling box-like articles, comprising:
 - a storage area containing a plurality of columns of storage bins, each storage bin for holding one
5 article;
 - a vertical support shaft located adjacent the storage area;
 - a manipulator assembly coupled to the shaft and movable along the shaft, said manipulator assembly
10 including at least one arm assembly having a rail extending outward from the shaft and a gripper mechanism movable along the rail, the gripper mechanism having first and second spaced fingers which are movable toward each other to grasp opposite sides of an article; and
15 means for positioning each arm assembly adjacent the columns and adjacent an article pickup or delivery location.
2. The system of claim 1 wherein the means for positioning includes means for rotating the manipulator assembly about the shaft to position each arm assembly at different radial positions with respect to the shaft.
3. The system of claim 2 wherein the columns of storage bins and the article pickup and delivery locations are arranged in a circular configuration about the support shaft.
4. The system of claim 3 wherein the manipulator assembly includes a bearing assembly movable along the support shaft and a hub assembly which is rotatable about the bearing assembly, wherein each arm assembly is
5 attached to the hub assembly to rotate therewith and wherein the means for rotating includes a first motor for driving the hub assembly with respect to the bearing assembly.

5 5. The system of claim 4 wherein there are a plurality of arm assemblies, each arm assembly including a second motor for driving the gripper mechanism along the rail and electrically controlled actuator means for actuating the gripper mechanism.

5 6. The system of claim 5 including means for providing control signals for the second motor and actuator means of each arm assembly to the bearing assembly and coupling means for coupling the control signals to the hub assembly.

7. The system of claim 6 wherein the coupling means includes:

5 a first coupling element on the bearing assembly and a second coupling element on the hub assembly, the first and second coupling elements having facing surfaces with complementary circular channels therein to form a coupling cavity;

10 light transmitter means on the first coupling element for converting electrical signals to light signals and transmitting them into the cavity;

15 light receiver means on the second coupling element for receiving light signals in the cavity and converting them into electrical signals for delivery to the second motor and actuator means of each arm assembly.

8. The system of claim 7 including light transmitter means on the second coupling element and light receiving means on the first coupling element, thereby facilitating transmission of signals from the manipulator assembly.

9. The system of claim 7 wherein the channels of the first and second coupling elements have reflective surfaces whereby signals transmitted into the channel will reflect off of the surface of the channel until received by the light receiving means.

10. The system of claim 7 further including slip ring means for coupling power signals from the bearing assembly to the hub assembly.

11. The system of claim 1 wherein the shaft has a square cross section and the manipulator assembly includes a bearing assembly including a first group of four rollers, each roller having a V-groove and
5 contacting a different corner of the shaft, and a second group of four rollers spaced from the first group, each roller having a V-groove and contacting a different corner of the shaft.

12. The system of claim 11 including means for driving the manipulator assembly along the shaft, said means including belt connected to the manipulator assembly and extending along the length of the shaft and
5 a motor for driving the belt.

13. The system of claim 12 wherein the shaft is hollow and the belt is looped through the shaft.

14. The system of claim 12 including closed loop drive means for driving the motor to position the manipulator assembly at a desired vertical location on the shaft.

15. The system of claim 14 including first feedback means for providing a coarse indication of the position of the manipulator assembly.

16. The system of claim 15 including second feedback means for providing a fine indication of the position of the manipulator assembly, said second feedback means including position markings on the shaft
5 and an optical sensor on the manipulator assembly for reading the position markings to provide feedback.

17. The system of claim 11 wherein the rollers include spring means for biasing the rollers toward the shaft.

18. The system of claim 12 further including a counterweight coupled to the manipulator assembly to move in a direction opposite that of the manipulator assembly.

19. The system of claim 1 wherein the first finger of the gripper mechanism is stationary and the second finger is a flat spring element and further including a motor driven cam for moving the spring
5 element from an open to a closed position.

20. The system of claim 19 including a two-position motor for driving the cam.

21. The system of claim 1 wherein the gripper mechanism includes a plurality of V-groove rollers for coupling the gripper mechanism to the rail.

22. The system of claim 1 including a motor for driving the gripper mechanism along the rail and closed loop drive means for controlling the motor.

23. The system of claim 22 including feedback means for sensing the position of the gripper mechanism, wherein the drive means includes velocity profile generator means for controlling the velocity of the
5 motor as a function of the position of the gripper mechanism.

24. The system of claim 23 wherein the velocity profile generator means includes means for selecting from among different velocity profiles as a function of the operational status of the gripper mechanism.

25. A robotic materials handling system for storing and handling box-like articles comprising:

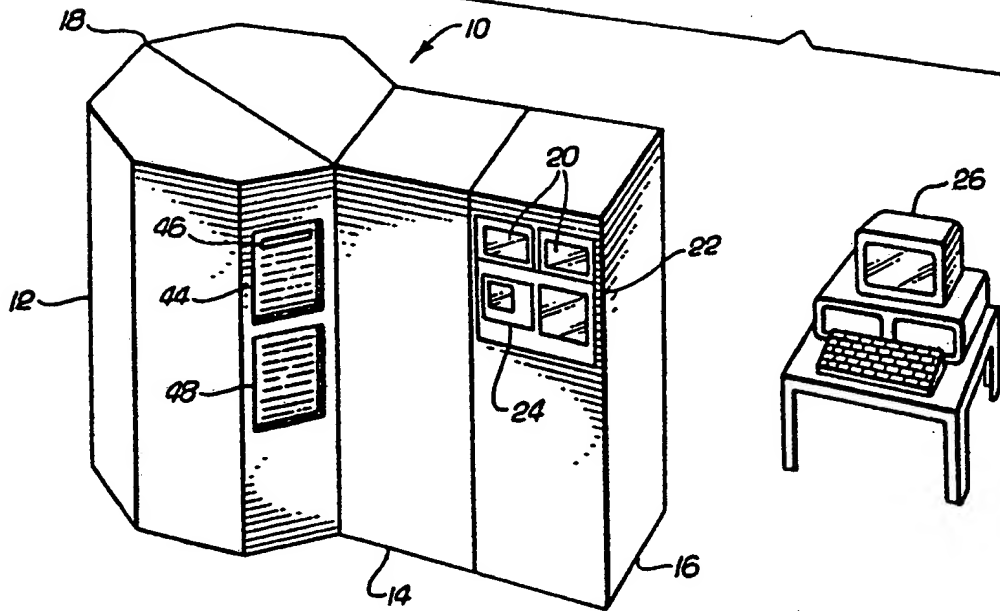
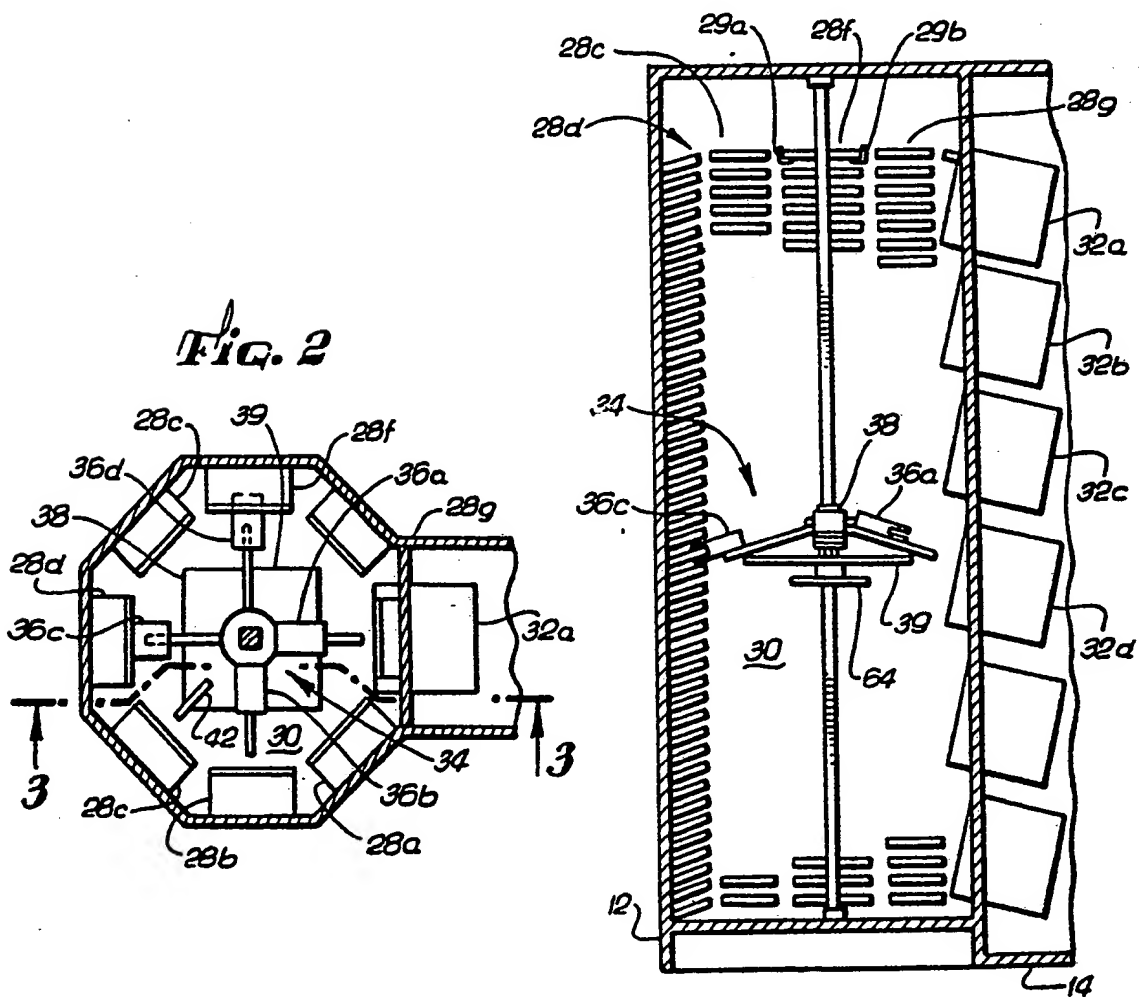
5 a storage area including a plurality of columns of storage bins and at least one loading location, said storage bins and loading location being arranged about a circular space;

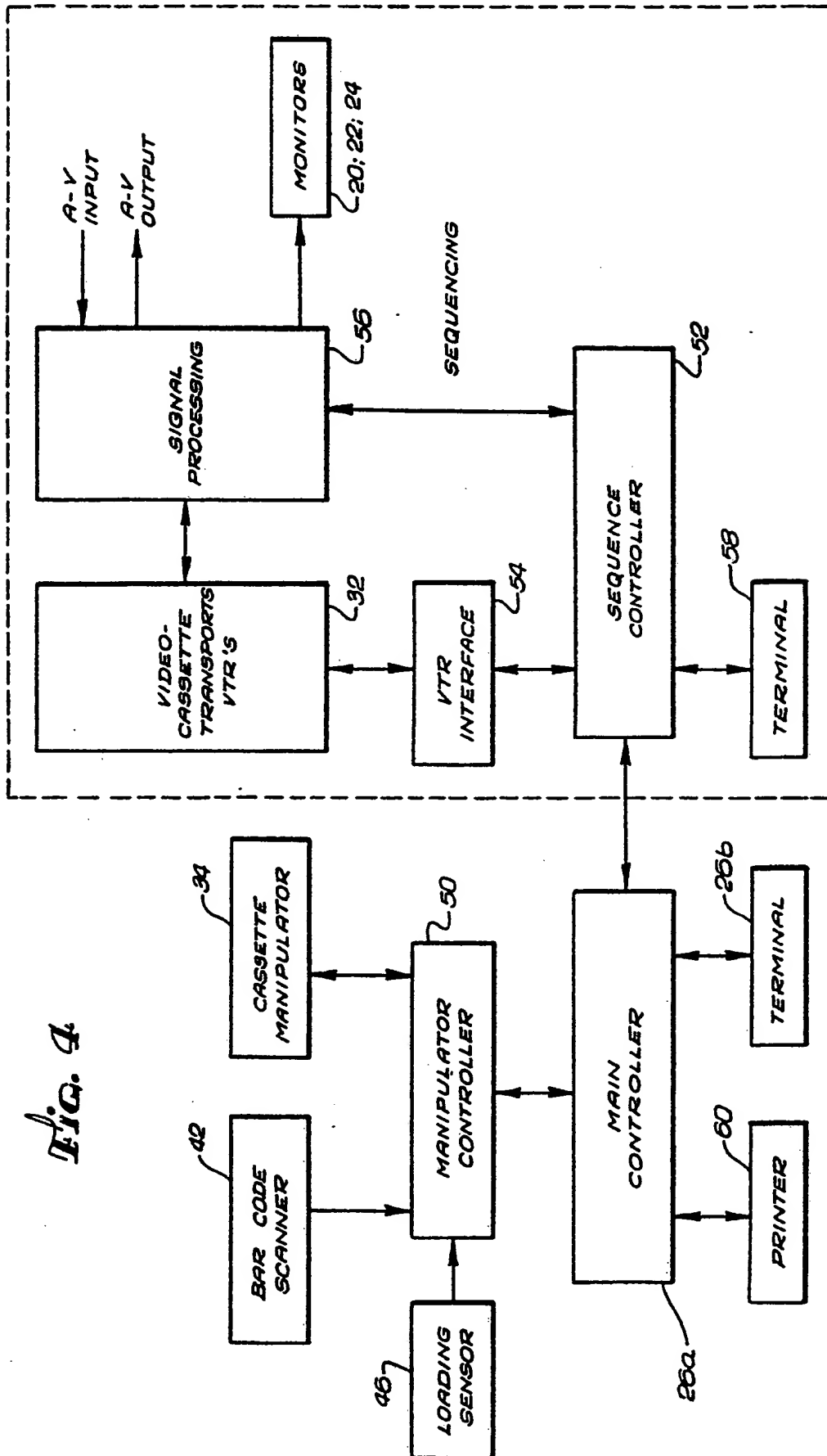
a vertical support shaft located at the center of the circular space;

10 a manipulator assembly, movable along the shaft, for moving articles between storage bins and the loading location, the manipulator assembly including a plurality of radially extendable gripper assemblies for grasping articles and pulling them out of the storage bins and means for rotating the gripper assemblies about the
15 shaft to position them adjacent desired columns of storage bins; and

control means for controlling the movement of the manipulator assembly along the shaft, the rotation of the gripper assemblies and the grasping of the gripper
20 assemblies.

26. The system of claim 25 including means for monitoring the rotational and vertical position of the manipulator assembly, wherein the control means causes the gripper assemblies to operate only after the
5 manipulator has reached the desired position.

Fig. 1*Fig. 3*



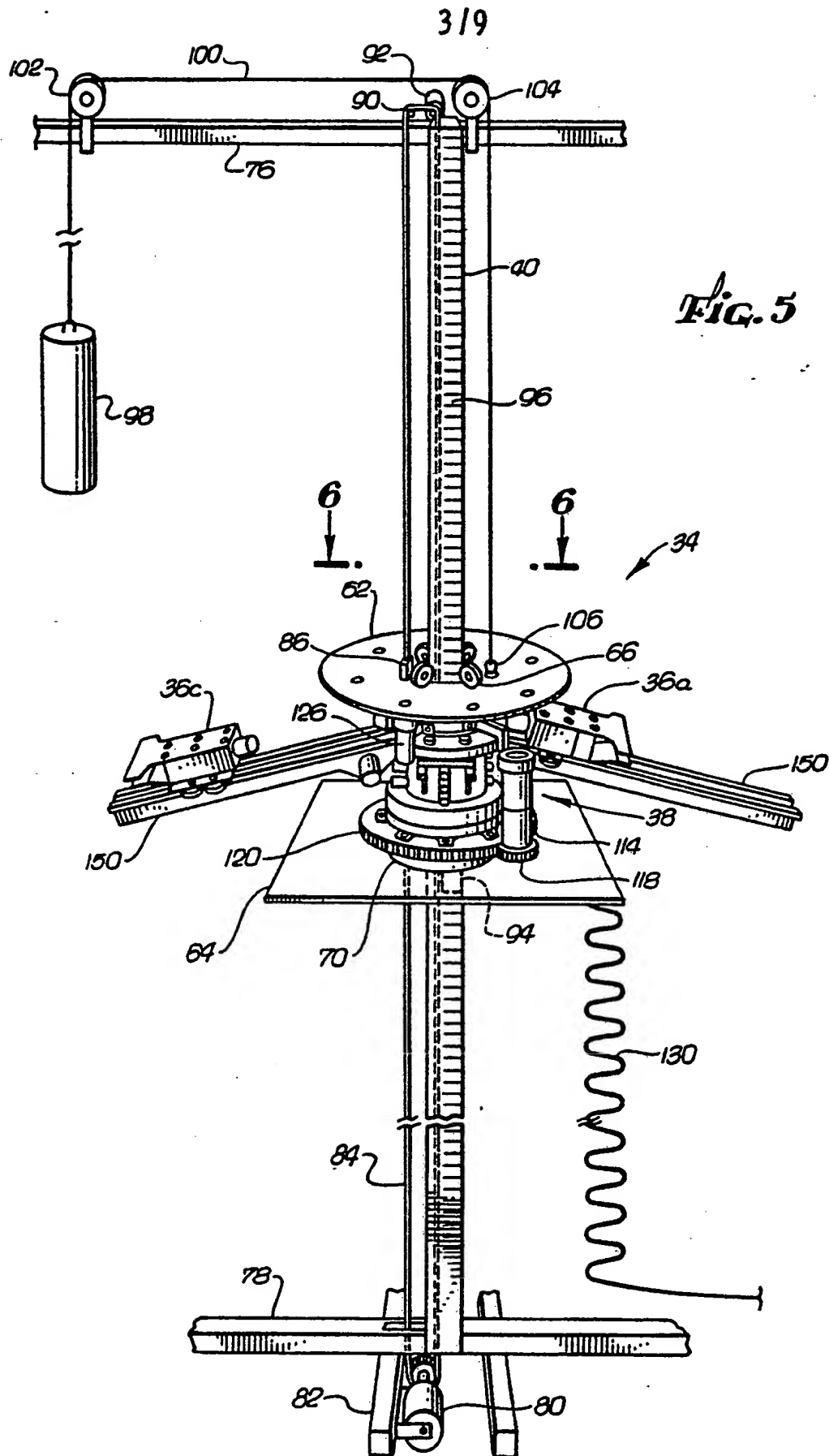


FIG. 6

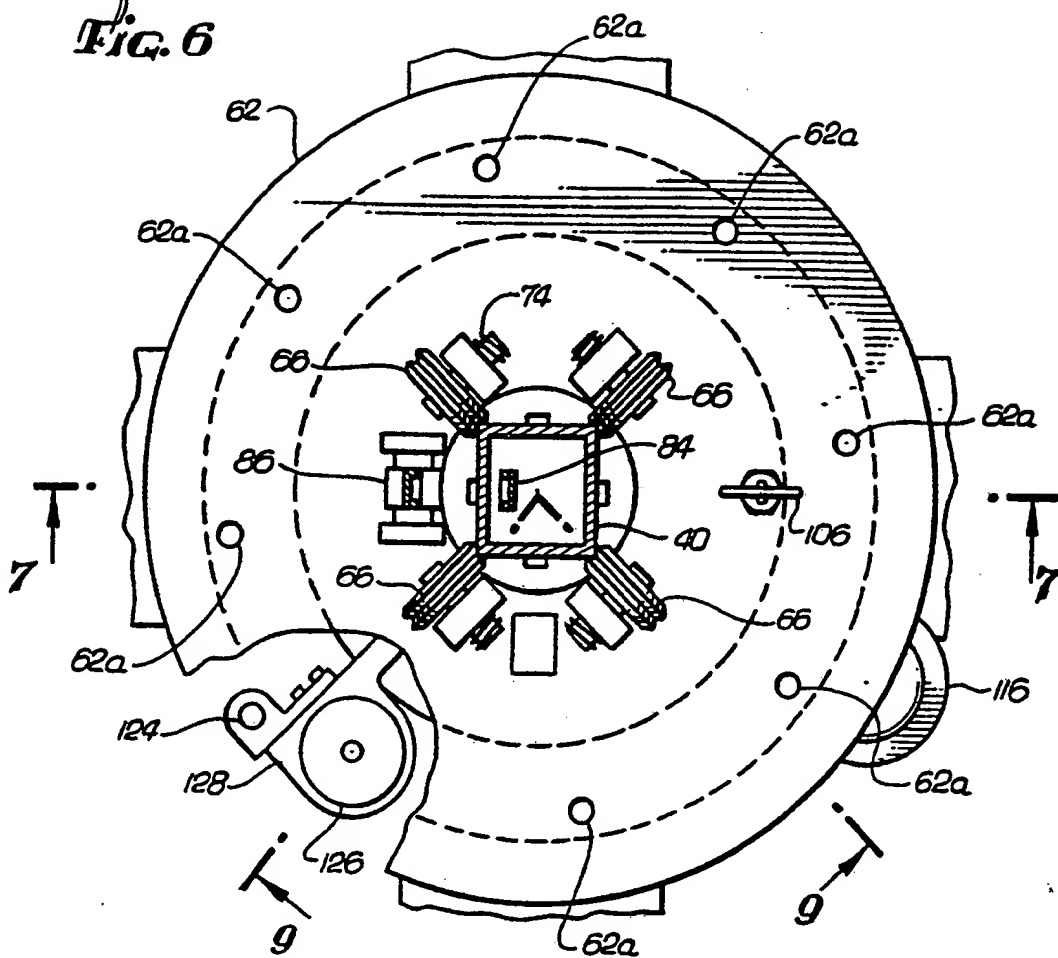
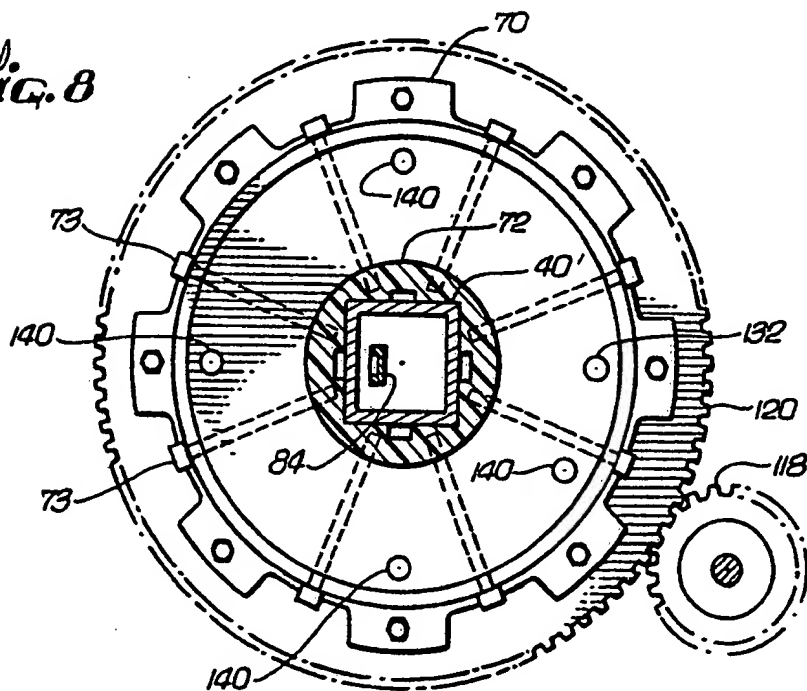


FIG. 8



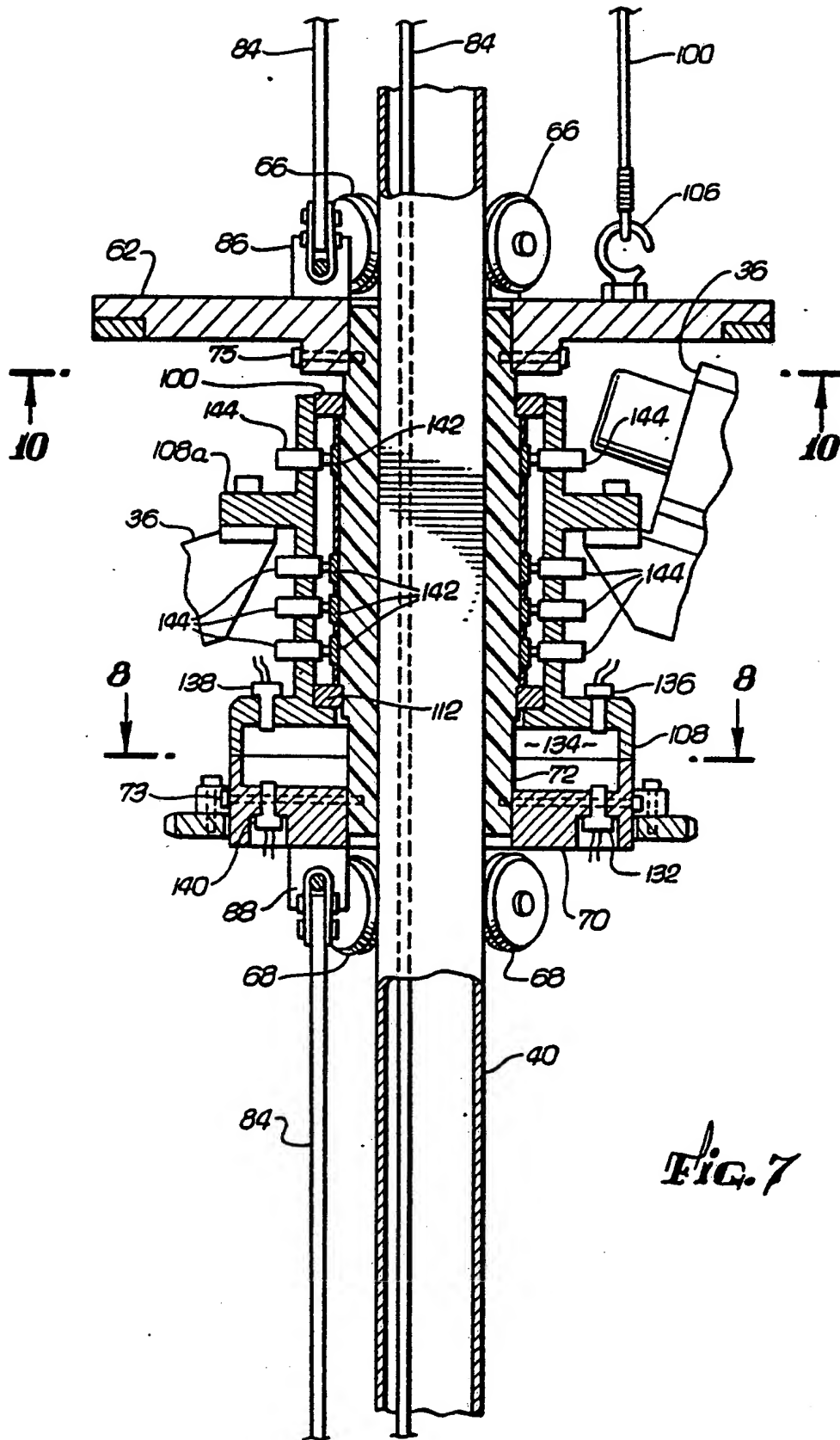


Fig. 7

Fig. 9

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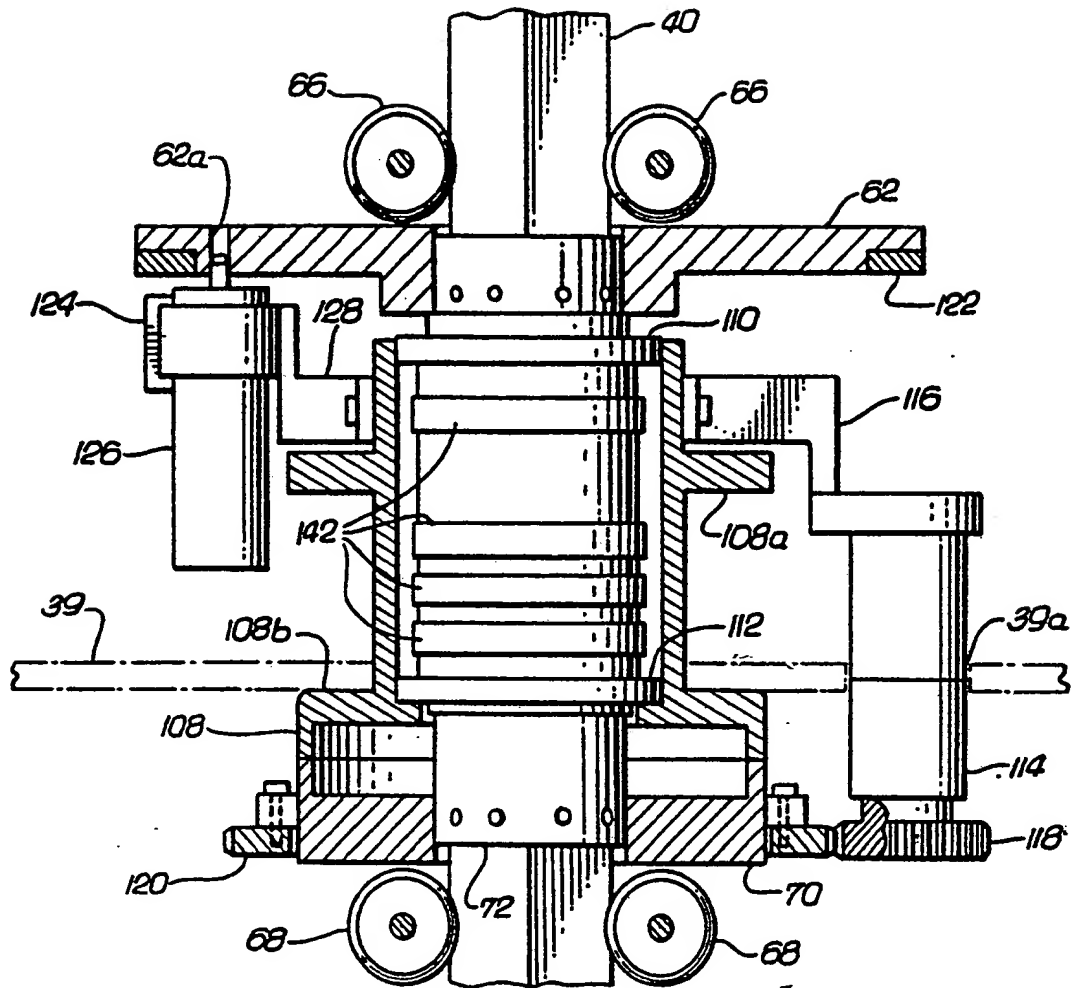


Fig. 10

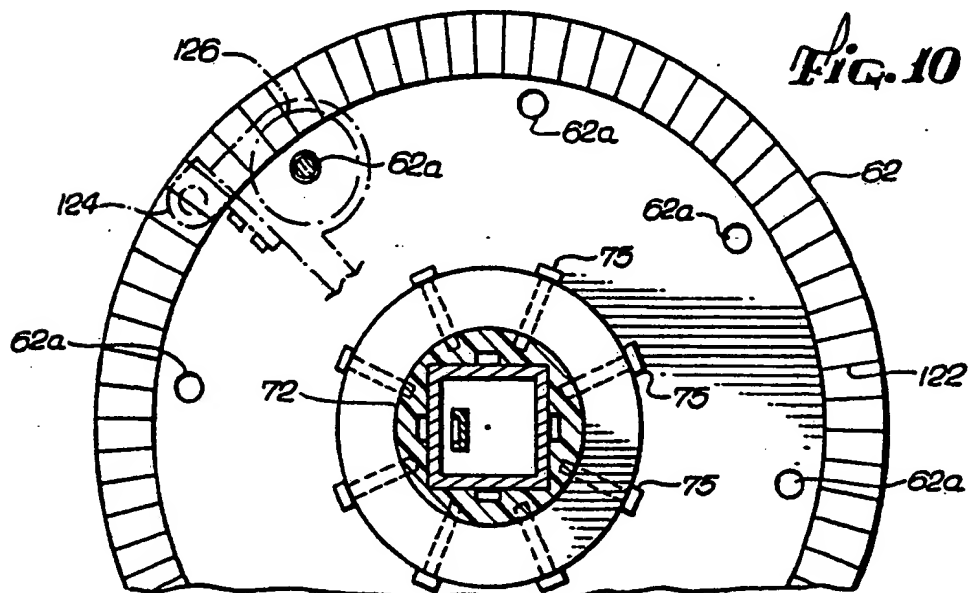
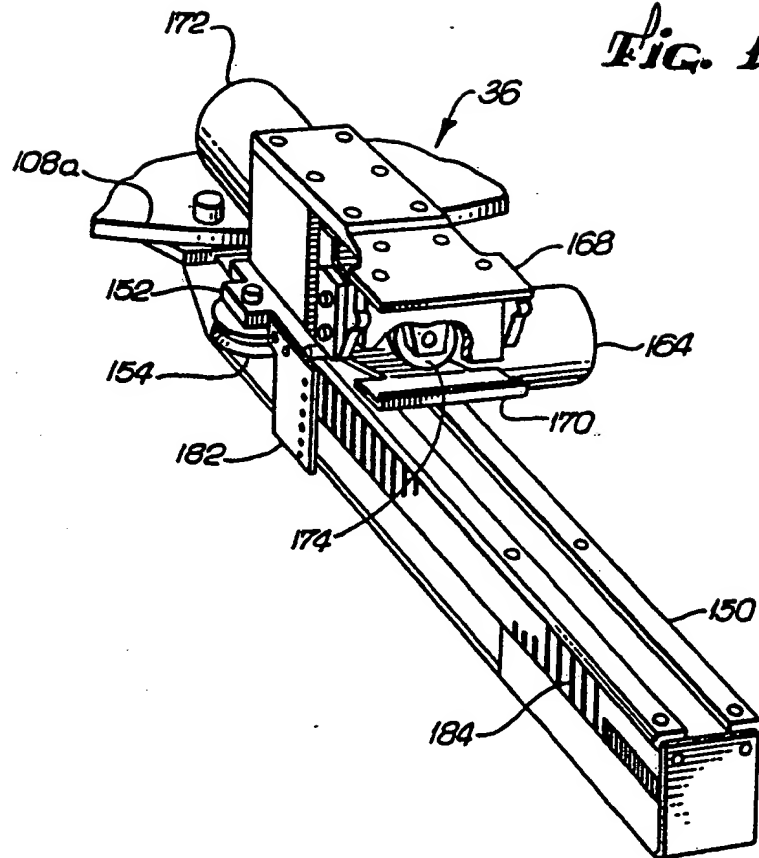


FIG. 11

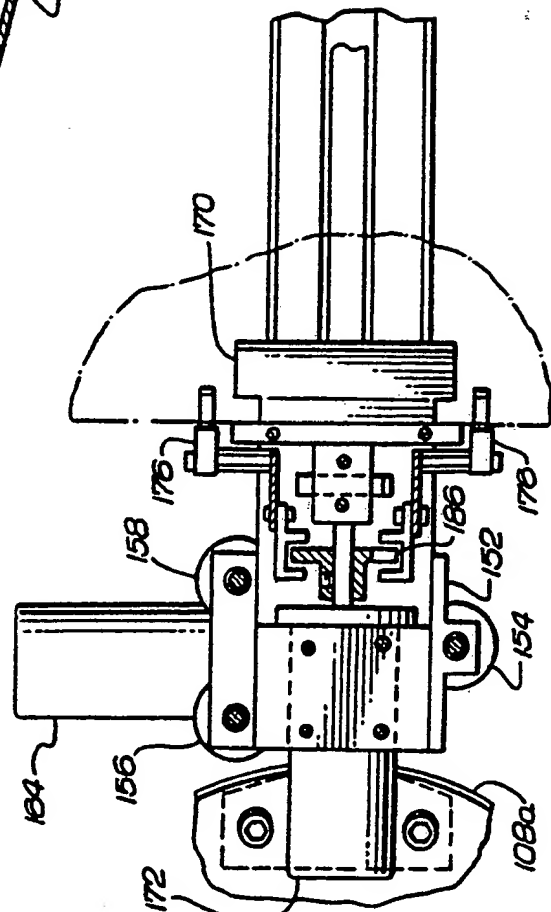
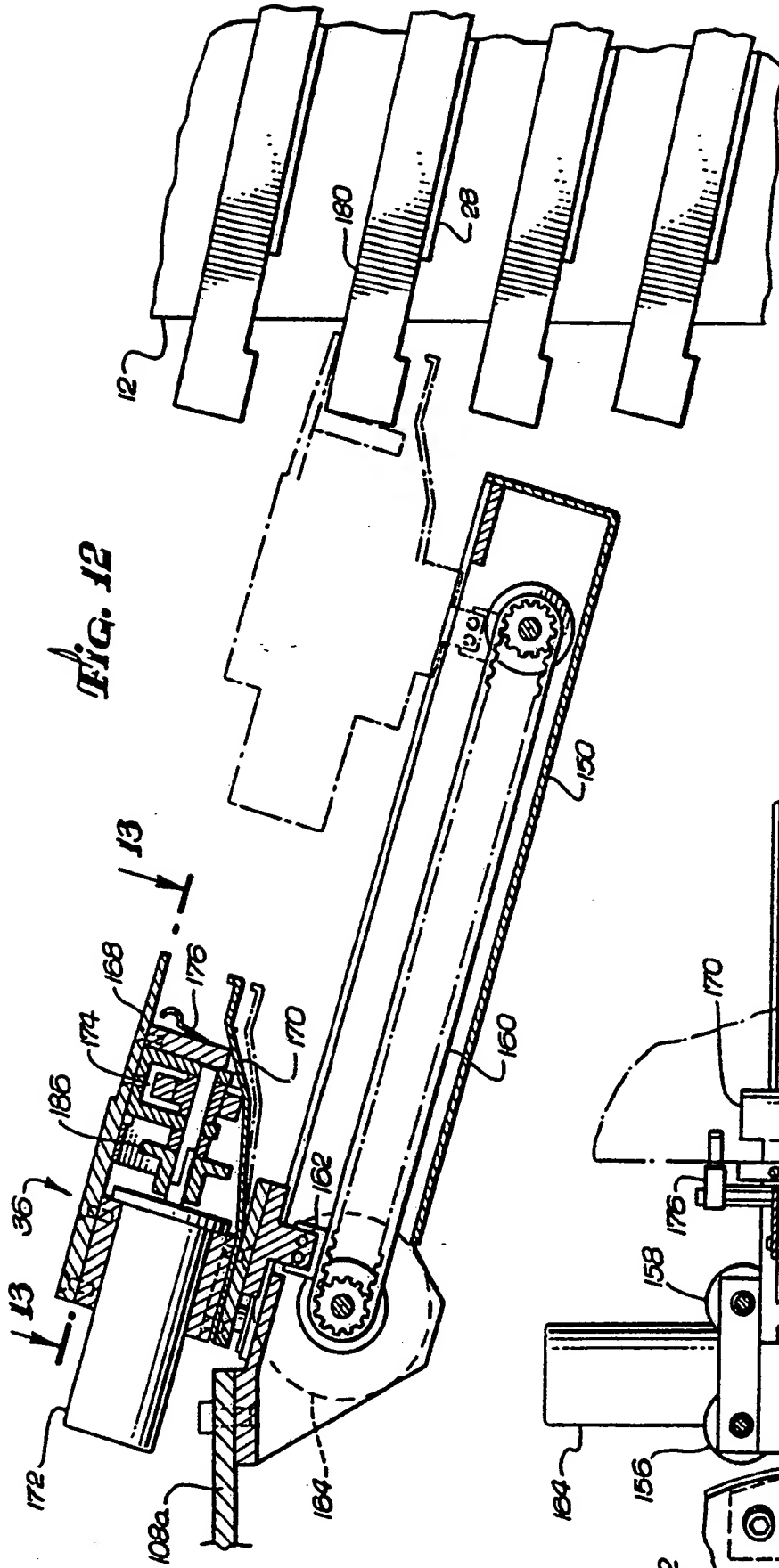
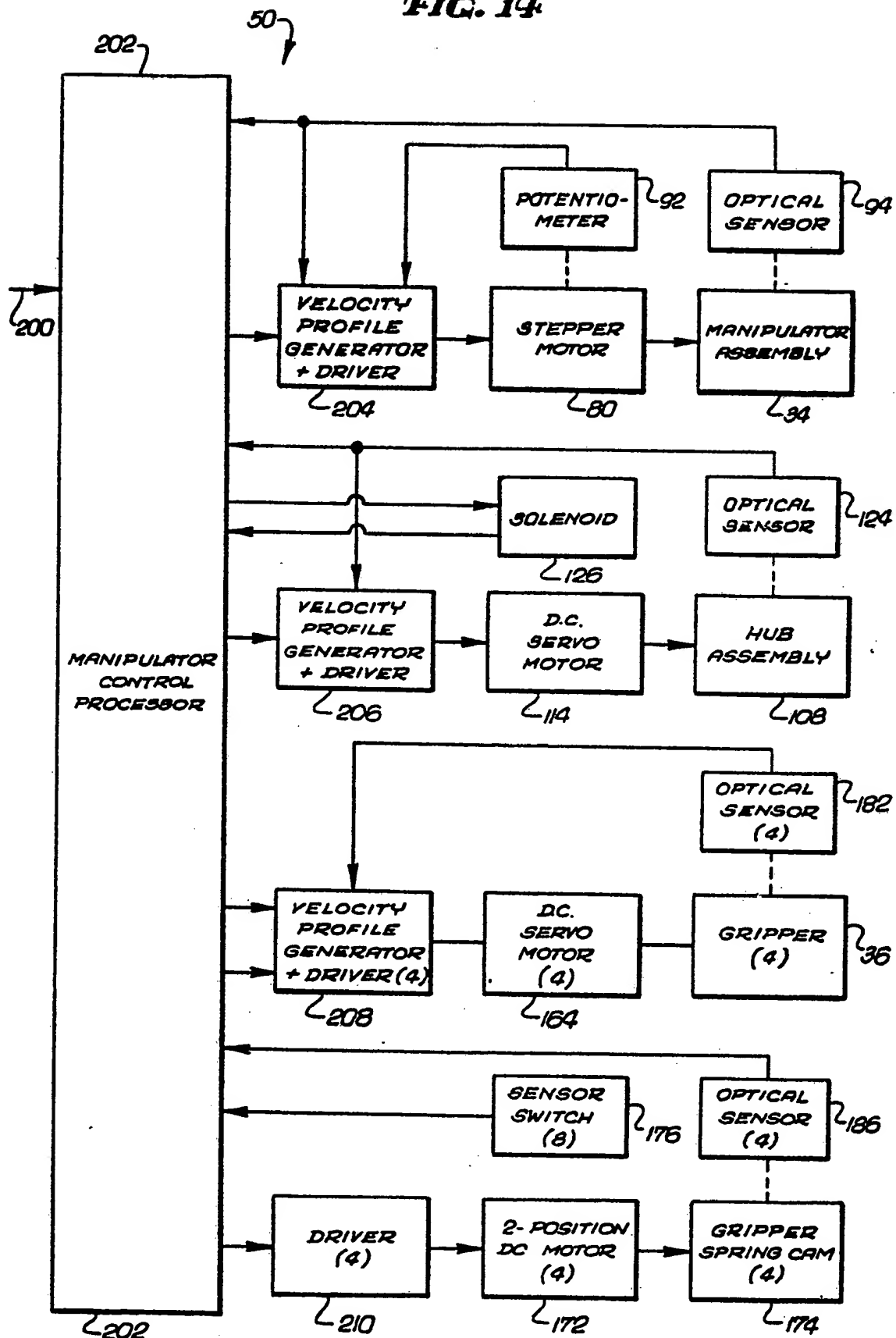


Fig. 14



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/US85/01402

I. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER (If several classification symbols apply, indicate all) ³

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both National Classification and IPC

INT. CL. B65G 1/06
U.S. CL. 414/273

II. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum Documentation Searched ⁴

Classification System	Classification Symbols
U.S.	414/273, 274, 276, 277, 280, 283, 618, 659, 661, 662, 672, 673, 785 221/87, 88 (continued)

Documentation Searched other than Minimum Documentation
to the Extent that such Documents are Included in the Fields Searched ⁵

III. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT ¹⁴

Category ⁶	Citation of Document, ¹⁶ with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages ¹⁷	Relevant to Claim No. ¹⁸
Y, P	US, A, 4,527,934, (BLASECK) 09 July 1985	1-2, 11-24
Y	US, A, 3,302,804, (HARRIS) 07 February 1967	1-6, 11-26
Y	US, A, 3,951,271, (METTE) 20 April 1976	1-6, 11-26
Y	US, A, 3,517,775, (MEYER) 30 June 1970, See figures 2 and 3	11-14, 21
Y	US, A, 4,415,975, (BURT) 15 November 1983, See Abstract	15-16, 23-24
Y	US, A, 3,517,774, (MEYER) 30 June 1970, See figure 8	17
Y	US, A, 2,212,711, (MACISAAC) 27 August 1940, See page 1, column 2, lines 41-43	18
Y	US, A, 4,383,789, (TAKAMATSU) 17 May 1983, See figure 6	19-20

(continued)

* Special categories of cited documents: ¹⁵

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date

"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.

"&" document member of the same patent family

IV. CERTIFICATION

Date of the Actual Completion of the International Search ¹

01 September 1985

International Searching Authority ¹

ISA/US

Date of Mailing of this International Search Report ²

16 SEP 1985

Signature of Authorizing Officer ¹⁹

Ken Muncy

III. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT (CONTINUED FROM THE SECOND SHEET)

Category *	Citation of Document, ¹⁶ with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages ¹⁷	Relevant to Claim No ¹⁸
A	US, A, 4,458,802, (MACIVER ET AL) 10 July 1984	1, 25
A	US, A, 4,300,040, (GOULD ET AL) 10 November 1981	1, 25
A	US, A, 4,366,423, (INABA ET AL) 28 December 1982	1, 25
A	US, A, 3,061,111, (RIEMENSCHNEIDER) 30 October 1962, See figure 4	10
A	CA, A, 504,400, (RENFROE) 20 July 1954	19-20
A	JP, A, 53-75674, (TADAMITSU) 05 July 1978	15-16, 23-24
A	JP, A, 56-12204, (JINICHI) 06 February 1981	1, 25
P, A	US, A, 4,519,522, (MCELWEE) 28 May 1985	25

FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM THE SECOND SHEET

II. FIELDS SEARCHED

U.S. 294/99.1, 103.1, 104
901/17
187/95
235/381

V. ☐ OBSERVATIONS WHERE CERTAIN CLAIMS WERE FOUND UNSEARCHABLE ¹⁰

This international search report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2) (a) for the following reasons:

1. ☐ Claim numbers _____, because they relate to subject matter ¹² not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:

2. ☐ Claim numbers _____, because they relate to parts of the international application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful international search can be carried out ¹³, specifically:

VI. ☐ OBSERVATIONS WHERE UNITY OF INVENTION IS LACKING ¹¹

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application as follows:

1. ☐ As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers all searchable claims of the international application.

2. ☐ As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers only those claims of the international application for which fees were paid, specifically claims:

3. ☐ No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this international search report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claim numbers:

4. ☐ As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee, the International Searching Authority did not invite payment of any additional fee.

Remark on Protest

☐ The additional search fees were accompanied by applicant's protest.

☐ No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.

Salute Claim Coverage

Summary of aspects of disposable salute device covered by independent claims

Bend trailing end of wire inwardly - apparatus and method claims (70170US02, 70173US01, 70173US02, 70175US01)
Cam & cam follower wire drive (70180US00)
Cartridge w/ lateral openings - (MPF and standard claims) (70162US00, 70162US01)
Cartridge w/ 2 pairs of diametrically opposed openings - apparatus and method claims (70170US01, 70173US01)
Compartment to store wire (70166US01)
Complete loop formation with complete movement of lever (70180US00)
Cutter cuts proximal to portion of channel that deforms wire (70173US02)
Cutter that cuts and ejects - apparatus and method claims (70175US01)
Cutter to cut, bend, and lift wire - apparatus and method claims (70173US01)
Cutter w/ flexible element (70168US02)
Drive for contacting wire through lateral openings - (MPF and standard claims) (70162US00, 70162US01)
Drive adjacent to distal end (70166US01, 70180US00)
Drive causes wire to puncture tissue - apparatus and method claims (70166US01, 70173US02, 70175US01)
End recess to receive pliable surface of subject (70168US02)
End recess to receive wire loop - apparatus and method claims (70168US01, 70168US02, 70173US01, 70175US01)
Lateral recess to allow passage of loop (70175US01)
Lateral recess to receive pliable surface - method claim (70175US01)
Lever doesn't move wire drive for a portion of lever's motion (e.g., during cutting) (70180US00)
Protuberance extends w/in loop (70173US02)
Release wire in a lateral direction - method claim (70175US01)
S - shaped channel to deform wire (71065US02)
Tapered lateral sides of distal end of instrument - apparatus and method claims (70175US01)
Wire moves away from distal end (70165US02, 70173US02)
Wire moves away from distal end along a curved trajectory - apparatus and method claims (70168US02, 70175US01)
Wire returns to distal end - method claim (70170US02)
Wire returns to distal end w/o requiring additional contact - apparatus and method claims (70165US02)

BOLD lettering indicates that the case is issued as a US Patent or is allowed/under a Quayle action.

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat. No.	WCS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
6332889	D0188.70162US00	1 40-PDD-04-42								1. A device for fixing a flexible elongated element to a portion of a subject, said device comprising: structure for retaining the flexible elongated element; advancement means for longitudinally advancing the flexible elongated element from a proximal end of said device toward a distal end of said device with sufficient force to pass the element through the portion of the subject while said advancement means remain outside of the portion of the subject; and securing means for securing the element to the subject and for variably adjusting a securing force applied by the flexible elongated element to the portion of the subject.
6332889	D0188.70162US00	1 40-PDD-04-42								13. Apparatus for joining two segments at a surgical site, said apparatus comprising: a flexible elongated element including a first portion and a second portion; means for advancing said first portion of said flexible elongated element through each of a first segment and a second segment while said means for advancing remain outside of the first segment and the second segment; and means for joining said first portion of said flexible elongated element with said second portion of said flexible elongated element such that the joiner is variably adjustable, whereby each of said first and second segments are maintained in selected proximity to one another.
6332889	D0188.70162US00	1 40-PDD-04-42	Cartridge (mpf) w/ lateral openings Drive (mpf) for contacting wire through lateral openings		X	X		X		21. A system for providing controlled movement of a flexible elongated element within a medical instrument, said system comprising: support means mounted in the medical instrument for axially surrounding the flexible elongated element, said support means comprising a distal end and a proximal end and including at least one lateral opening located between said distal end and said proximal end; and drive means mounted in the medical instrument for contacting the flexible elongated element through said lateral opening so as to urge said flexible elongated element to move longitudinally within said support means, said support means serving to inhibit lateral movement of said flexible elongated element.
6332889	D0188.70162US00	1 40-PDD-04-42	Cartridge (mpf) w/ lateral openings Drive (mpf) for contacting wire through lateral openings		X	X		X		23. A suturing instrument for joining portions of a subject during a medical procedure, said device comprising: a proximal end, a distal end, and a longitudinal axis extending between said proximal and distal ends, said distal end including an opening; a flexible elongated element extending along said longitudinal axis toward said distal end; guide means for restricting the movement of said flexible elongated element in directions other than along said longitudinal axis, said guide means having a lateral opening; and advancement means for advancing said flexible elongated element along said longitudinal axis toward said distal end of said device, said advancement means engaging said flexible elongated element through said lateral opening.

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat. No.	WGS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
6332889	D0188.70162US00	140-PDD-04-42								24. A method of applying sutures with a suturing instrument, said method comprising the steps of: advancing a suture material along a longitudinal axis of the suturing instrument toward a distal end thereof; forcing the suture material through a subject to be sutured at the distal end of the suturing instrument; twisting together a free end of the suture material extending from the subject and a remaining portion of the suture material so as to lock the free end of the suture material to the remaining portion of the suture material.
6332889	D0188.70162US00	140-PDD-04-42								29. A device for fixing a wire in tissue, the device comprising: support structure for retaining the wire; advancement apparatus for advancing the wire through said support structure and out a distal end portion of said support structure with sufficient force to drive a distal end portion of the wire through the tissue; receiving structure for receiving and retaining the distal end portion of the wire; and rotation apparatus for twisting together the distal end portion of the wire and a further portion of the wire adjacent to the distal end portion of the wire, so as to adjustably fix the wire to the tissue.
6332889	D0188.70162US00	140-PDD-04-42								32. A device for fixing a wire in tissue, the device comprising: support structure for retaining the wire; opposed gripper members at a distal end of said device for gripping the tissue therebetween; advancement apparatus for advancing the wire through said support structure and out a distal portion of a first of said gripper members with sufficient force to drive a distal end portion of the wire through the tissue and into a receiving cavity in a distal end portion of a second of said grippers; and rotation apparatus for rotating said gripper members about an axis for twisting together said distal end portion of the wire and a further portion of the wire adjacent the distal end portion of the wire, so as to adjustably fix the wire to the tissue.

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat. No.	WCS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
6332889	D0188.70162US00	I 40-PDD-04-42								<p>33. An assembly for suturing together first and second portions of tissue, the assembly comprising: a wire suture element, said wire suture element being of such flexibility as to (1) bend if not supported along a length thereof, and (2) twist upon itself and not deform tissue in which said wire suture element is disposed; support structure for retaining said wire suture element along a selected path; opposed gripper members fixed to a distal end of said support structure for gripping the tissue portions therebetween, said gripper members having opposed channels therein for receiving said wire suture element, said channels being generally normal to a lengthwise axis of said support structure; advancement apparatus for advancing the wire suture element through said support structure, through the channel in a first of said gripper members, through the tissue portions, and into the channel in a second of said gripper members; and rotation apparatus for rotating said gripper members around the lengthwise axis of said support structure for twisting together first and second portions of the wire suture element adjacent to the tissue, whereby to variably join together the two wire suture element portions and thereby suture together the first and second portions of tissue.</p>
6332889	D0188.70162US00	I 40-PDD-04-42								<p>35. A suture supply cartridge for a suture tool, the tool comprising a housing, an elongated tube extending from the housing, an advancement apparatus for advancing a suture distally through the tube, and a control actuator mounted on the housing for selective operation of the suture advancement apparatus, the suture supply cartridge comprising: a cartridge housing adapted for attachment to the tool; a wall disposed in said cartridge housing and, in cooperation with said cartridge housing, defining a chamber for storage of the suture; a wire guide support having a base portion fixed to said wall, and having a protrusion portion extending distally from said base portion, said base portion and said protrusion portion defining a bore extending axially therethrough, said protrusion portion having openings in side walls thereof; and an elongated suture guide fixed in said wire guide support and extending distally therefrom, said suture guide having openings in side walls thereof aligned with said protrusion openings, the suture extending through said suture guide; said suture wire guide protrusion openings being adapted to receive drive wheel portions of the tool advancement apparatus upon connection of said cartridge housing to said tool, such that said drive wheel portions extend through said suture guide openings to engage the suture.</p>

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat. No.	WGS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
6332889	D0188.70162US00	140-PDD-04-42								36. A method for suturing first and second tissue portions, the method comprising: holding an edge of the first tissue portion adjacent to an edge of the second tissue portion; driving a strand of suture material through the first and second tissue portions proximate to the tissue portion edges, a portion of the strand exiting the second tissue portion; twisting together the exited portion of the strand and a portion of the strand adjacent to a suture entry location on the first tissue portion; and severing the suture to separate the twisted-together portions of the strand from a remainder of the suture strand.
6332889	D0188.70162US00	140-PDD-04-42								40. A system for suturing tissue at a surgical site within a mammalian body, the system comprising: a single instrument for passing a first portion of suture through the tissue and for intertwining the first portion of suture with a second portion of suture so as to form a joinder of said suture portions at the surgical site, whereby to lock the suture in position relative to the tissue.
6332889	D0188.70162US00	140-PDD-04-42								42. A suturing device, comprising: a housing; a shaft extending distally from said housing; a pair of opposing jaws located at a distal end of the shaft, said jaws adapted to grasp two elements to be sutured together without piercing the elements; and a source of suture material located in the housing, the distal end of the suture material extending through the shaft and being adapted to be pushed through the two elements to be sutured together.
6332889	D0188.70162US00	140-PDD-04-42								44. A suturing device, comprising: a housing; a shaft extending distally from said housing; a pair of opposing jaws located at a distal end of the shaft; a source of suture material located in the housing; a first motor located in the housing for advancing the suture material through the shaft, through one of the jaws, through two elements to be sutured together, and into the other jaw; and a second motor located in the housing for rotating the shaft and the jaws to secure the suture material to the two elements.

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat. No.	WCS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
6332889	D0188.70162US00	140-PDD-04-42								49. A method for suturing together two separate elements, comprising: bringing the first element adjacent the second element; piercing the first and second elements with a length of suture material through the first and second elements, such that a free, distal portion of the suture material extends distally past the second element and a proximal portion of the suture material extends proximally past the first element; and twisting together the free distal portion and the proximal portion of the suture material to secure the first and second elements together.
6332889	D0188.70162US00	140-PDD-04-42								51. Apparatus for ligating a subject at a surgical site, said apparatus comprising: a flexible elongated element including a first portion and a second portion; means for advancing said first portion of said flexible elongated element around the subject; and means for joining said first portion of said flexible elongated element with said second portion of said flexible elongated element by twisting said first portion and said second portion together such that the joiner is variably adjustable.
6332889	D0188.70162US00	140-PDD-04-42								52. A device for fixing a flexible elongated element to a portion of a subject, said device comprising: structure for retaining the flexible elongated element; advancement means for longitudinally advancing the flexible elongated element from a proximal end of said device toward a distal end of said device with sufficient force to pass the element through the portion of the subject; and securing means for securing the element to the subject and for variably adjusting a securing force applied by the flexible elongated element to the portion of the subject; wherein a longitudinal axis extends between said proximal and distal ends of said device, and wherein said securing means include a rotation unit for rotating said distal end of said device about said longitudinal axis.
6332889	D0188.70162US00	140-PDD-04-42								53. A device for fixing a flexible elongated element to a portion of a subject, said device comprising: structure for retaining the flexible elongated element; advancement means for longitudinally advancing the flexible elongated element from a proximal end of said device toward a distal end of said device with sufficient force to pass the element through the portion of the subject; and securing means for securing the element to the subject and for variably adjusting a securing force applied by the flexible elongated element to the portion of the subject; wherein said device further includes a cutting unit for selectively cutting a portion of a distal end of said flexible elongated element.

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat. No.	WGS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
6332889	D0188.70162US00	140-PDD-04-42								<p>54. A device for use in passing a flexible elongated element through at least two portions of a subject, said device comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a hollow wire guide for guiding the flexible elongated element through said device toward a distal end of said device and toward the subject; at least one drive unit for urging the elongated element toward said distal end of said device through said hollow wire guide, and passing the elongated element through the at least two portions of the subject; and securing means for variably adjusting a securing force applied by the flexible elongated element to the at least two portions of the subject, so as to secure together the at least two portions of the subject with a selected force; <p>wherein said device further includes a longitudinal axis extending between a proximal end and said distal end of said device, and wherein said securing means include a rotation unit for rotating said distal end of said device about said longitudinal axis.</p>
6332889	D0188.70162US00	140-PDD-04-42								<p>55. A device for use in passing a flexible elongated element through at least two portions of a subject, said device comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a hollow wire guide for guiding the flexible elongated element through said device toward a distal end of said device and toward the subject; at least one drive unit for urging the elongated element toward said distal end of said device through said hollow wire guide, and passing the elongated element through the at least two portions of the subject; and securing means for variably adjusting a securing force applied by the flexible elongated element to the at least two portions of the subject, so as to secure together the at least two portions of the subject with a selected force; <p>wherein said device further includes a cutting unit for selectively cutting a portion of a distal end of said flexible elongated element.</p>
6332889	D0188.70162US00	140-PDD-04-42								<p>56. Apparatus for joining two segments at a surgical site, said apparatus comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a flexible elongated element including a first portion and a second portion; means for advancing said first portion of said flexible elongated element through each of a first segment and a second segment; and means for joining said first portion of said flexible elongated element with said second portion of said flexible elongated element such that the joiner is variably adjustable, whereby each of said first and second segments are maintained in selected proximity to one another; <p>wherein said flexible elongated element further includes a third portion, and said apparatus further includes means for cutting said flexible elongated element at a location between said second and third portions of said flexible elongated element.</p>

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat. No.	WCS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
6332889	D0188.70162US00	1 40-PDD-04-42								57. A system for providing controlled movement of a flexible elongated element within a medical instrument, said system comprising: support means mounted in the medical instrument for axially surrounding the flexible elongated element, said support means including at least one opening; and drive means mounted in the medical instrument for contacting the flexible elongated element through said opening so as to urge said flexible elongated element to move longitudinally within said support means, said support means serving to inhibit lateral movement of said flexible elongated element; wherein said system further includes rotation means for rotating a distal end of said device.
6332889	D0188.70162US00	1 40-PDD-04-42								58. A device for use in passing a flexible elongated element through at least two portions of a subject, said device comprising: a hollow wire guide for guiding the flexible elongated element through said device toward a distal end of said device and toward the subject; at least one drive unit for urging the elongated element toward said distal end of said device through said hollow wire guide, and passing the elongated element through the at least two portions of the subject; and securing means for variably adjusting a securing force applied by the flexible elongated element to the at least two portions of the subject, so as to secure together the at least two portions of the subject with a selected force; wherein a lubricious material is positioned between said flexible elongated element and said hollow wire guide.
6332889	D0188.70162US00	1 40-PDD-04-42								59. A device for fixing a flexible elongated element to a portion of a subject, said device comprising: structure for retaining the flexible elongated element; advancement means for longitudinally advancing the flexible elongated element from a proximal end of said device toward a distal end of said device with sufficient force to pass the element through the portion of the subject; and securing means for securing the element to the subject and for variably adjusting a securing force applied by the flexible elongated element to the portion of the subject; wherein said device further includes a cutting unit for selectively cutting a portion of a distal end of said flexible elongated element; and wherein said cutting unit is adapted to cut said flexible elongated element so as to form a sharp point on said flexible elongated element.

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat. No.	WGS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
6332889	D0188.70162US00	140-PDD-04-42								60. Apparatus for joining two segments at a surgical site, said apparatus comprising: a flexible elongated element including a first portion and a second portion; means for advancing said first portion of said flexible elongated element through each of a first segment and a second segment; and means for joining said first portion of said flexible elongated element with said second portion of said flexible elongated element such that the joiner is variably adjustable, whereby each of said first and second segments are maintained in selected proximity to one another; wherein said means for advancing includes a piezoelectric element.
6332889	D0188.70162US00	140-PDD-04-42								7. A device for use in passing a flexible elongated element through at least two portions of a subject, said device comprising: a hollow wire guide for guiding the flexible elongated element through said device toward a distal end of said device and toward the subject; at least one drive unit for urging the elongated element toward said distal end of said device through said hollow wire guide, and passing the elongated element through the at least two portions of the subject while said hollow wire guide remains outside of the at least two portions of the subject; and securing means for variably adjusting a securing force applied by the flexible elongated element to the at least two portions of the subject, so as to secure together the at least two portions of the subject with a selected force.
10/014991	D0188.70162US01	140-PDD-04-42-CON	Cartridge w/ lateral openings Drive for contacting wire through lateral openings		X	X		X		1. A surgical instrument for forming a suture in tissue, the instrument comprising: a proximal end and a distal end, the distal end arranged to form at least one suture using a portion of suture wire; a removable cartridge having a suture wire holder and an elongated suture wire guide, the cartridge having at least one opening arranged to expose a side of a portion of the suture wire; and a drive mechanism at least partially receivable in the opening of the removable cartridge so that the drive mechanism contacts a portion of the exposed side of the suture wire, wherein actuation of the drive mechanism moves the suture wire toward the distal end of the instrument.

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat. No.	WGS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
10/014991	D0188.70162US01	140-PDD-0442-CON	Cartridge w/ lateral openings			X		X		16. A suture wire supply cartridge for a suturing instrument having a drive mechanism, the suture wire supply cartridge comprising: a length of suture wire; a suture wire holder adapted to store at least a portion of the length of suture wire; and an elongated suture wire guide defining a guide pathway for the suture wire; wherein the suture wire supply cartridge has an opening adapted to expose a side of a portion of the suture wire and to receive at least a portion of the drive mechanism in contact with the exposed side of the suture wire, so that actuation of the drive mechanism draws suture wire from the holder and moves the suture wire along the guide pathway.
10/014991	D0188.70162US01	140-PDD-0442-CON	Cartridge w/ lateral openings			X		X		21. A suture wire supply cartridge for a suturing instrument, the suture wire supply cartridge comprising: a length of suture wire; a housing adapted to store at least a portion of the length of suture wire; a guide tube defining a guide pathway for the suture wire; and a guide tube support connected between the housing and the guide tube, the guide tube support having at least one opening that exposes at least a portion of a side of suture wire that extends from the housing through the guide tube support, the at least one opening adapted to receive at least a portion of a drive mechanism of the suturing instrument that engages the exposed portion of the suture wire to move the suture wire in the guide pathway of the guide tube.
10/014991	D0188.70162US01	140-PDD-0442-CON								24. A suturing instrument for providing a suture in a subject during a medical procedure, the instrument comprising: a proximal end, a distal end, and an elongated shaft with a longitudinal axis extending between the proximal and distal ends; a first jaw and a second jaw mounted at the distal end, at least the second jaw having an opening; a suture wire extending along the longitudinal axis toward the distal end; a guide path that guides movement of the suture wire toward the distal end; a drive mechanism that moves the suture wire along the longitudinal axis toward the distal end of the instrument; and securing means including a rotation unit for rotating the first and second jaws to twist together two portions of the suture wire so as to adjustably fix the suture wire to the tissue; wherein the drive mechanism moves the suture wire with force sufficient to exit the first jaw, penetrate the tissue, and move through the opening in the second jaw.

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat No.	WGS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
10/014991	D0188.70162US01	140-PDD-04-42-CON								33. A suturing instrument, comprising: a housing; an elongated shaft extending distally from the housing and having a distal end; a pair of opposed jaws located at a distal end of the shaft, the jaws being arranged for rotation relative to the housing; a source of suture wire located at least partially in the housing; a drive mechanism for moving the suture wire along a distal pathway in the shaft and one of the jaws; and a rotation unit adapted to rotate the jaws about the distal pathway.
10/014991	D0188.70162US01	140-PDD-04-42-CON								45. A suturing instrument for providing a suture in a subject during a medical procedure, the instrument comprising: a proximal end, a distal end, and an elongated shaft with a longitudinal axis extending between the proximal and distal ends; a first jaw and a second jaw mounted at the distal end, at least the second jaw having an opening; a suture wire extending along the longitudinal axis toward the distal end; a guide path that guides movement of the suture wire toward the distal end; a drive mechanism that moves the suture wire along the longitudinal axis toward the distal end of the instrument; and a removable cartridge of suture wire; wherein the drive mechanism moves the suture wire with force sufficient to exit the first jaw, penetrate the tissue, and move through the opening in the second jaw.
10/760634	D0188.70165US02	140-PDD-04-45-CON	Wire returns to distal end w/o requiring additional contact	X				X	X	24. A suturing instrument comprising: a handle; a shaft extending from the handle, the shaft having a proximal end near the handle and a distal end opposite the proximal end, the distal end of the shaft having an opening and a passageway to carry a suture wire to the opening, the passageway being constructed and arranged so that, when moved in the passageway, the suture wire exits the opening and loops back to the distal end of the shaft without requiring additional contact with the instrument; a wire drive adapted to move the suture wire in the passageway; and a cutter adapted to cut the suture wire at a location near the distal end of the shaft.

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat. No.	WGS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
10/760634	D0188.70165US02	140-PDD-04-45-CON	S - shaped channel to deform wire	X				X	X	43. A surgical instrument comprising: a handle; a shaft extending from the handle, the shaft having a proximal end near the handle and a distal end opposite the proximal end, the distal end of the shaft having an opening and a passageway adapted to carry a suture wire to the opening, the passageway having an "S" shaped portion arranged so that suture wire moving through the "S" shaped portion and upon exiting the opening forms a loop; a wire drive adapted to move the suture wire in the passageway; and a cutter adapted to cut the suture wire at a location near the distal end of the shaft.
10/760634	D0188.70165US02	140-PDD-04-45-CON	Wire returns to distal end w/o requiring additional contact - method claim	X				X	X	62. A method of forming a loop suture, comprising: driving deformable suture wire through a passageway in a suturing instrument having a distal end; bending the suture wire in the passageway to form a suture wire loop with suture wire that exits the distal end, the suture wire loop formed without requiring further contact of the instrument with the suture wire after the suture wire extends from the distal end of the suturing instrument; and cutting the suture wire to free the suture wire loop from the instrument.
10/760634	D0188.70165US02	140-PDD-04-45-CON	Wire moves away from distal end	X				X	X	7. A suturing instrument comprising: a handle; a shaft extending from the handle, the shaft having a proximal end near the handle and a distal end opposite the proximal end, the distal end of the shaft having an opening and a passageway constructed and arranged to carry a suture wire to the opening and to plastically deform the suture wire as the suture wire moves through the passageway to cause the suture wire to form a wire suture loop as the suture wire is extended from the opening in the distal end of the shaft, the passageway and the opening being arranged so that the suture wire extends in a generally distal direction upon exiting the opening; a wire drive adapted to move the suture wire in the passageway; and a cutter adapted to cut the suture wire at a location near the distal end of the shaft.

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat. No.	WGS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
10/051322	D0188.70166US01	140-PDD-04-46	Drive adjacent to distal end Compartment to store wire Drive causes wire to puncture tissue			X	X		X	35. A surgical device for passing a flexible elongated element through tissue of a subject, the device comprising: a flexible elongated element; an elongate shaft with a proximal end, a distal end with an opening, and a passageway adapted to deliver the elongated element toward the distal end and out of the opening; an advancement mechanism located adjacent the distal end of the elongated shaft and adapted to move the flexible elongated element in the passageway, the advancement mechanism having a first surface to engage a first lateral portion of the flexible elongated element such that movement of the first surface moves the flexible elongated element out of the opening with force sufficient to puncture the tissue; and a compartment to store a length of flexible elongated element in a coil in the surgical device.
10/051322	D0188.70166US01	140-PDD-04-46	Drive adjacent to distal end			X			X	66. A surgical device for passing a flexible elongated element through tissue of a subject, the device comprising: an elongate shaft with a proximal end, a distal end, and a passageway adapted to deliver the elongated element toward the distal end; an advancement mechanism located adjacent the distal end of the elongated shaft and adapted to move the flexible elongated element in the passageway, the advancement mechanism having a first surface adapted to engage a first lateral portion of the flexible elongated element such that movement of the first surface moves the flexible elongated element in the passageway; and a cutter adapted to cut the flexible elongated element.

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat. No.	WGS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
6527785	D0188.70168US01	I 40-PDD-04-48	End recess to receive wire		X			X	X	<p>1. A tool for joining a first layer of material to a second layer of material, said tool comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a handle; an end effector mounted on said handle and defining therein: a first channel for retaining a wire guide; a second channel extending from the first channel for supporting a suture wire extending from the wire guide; a passageway for retaining a cutter bar; and an end recess; <p>said second channel being curved to impart a looping configuration to portions of the suture wire passed therethrough; and</p> <p>said end recess having a curved surface at a bottom of said end recess, such that the end recess is adapted to receive the looped suture wire emerged from said second channel;</p> <p>a wire advancing actuator mounted on said handle for moving the suture wire through said second channel and through the material first and second layers; and</p> <p>a wire cutting actuator mounted on said handle for moving the cutting bar into cutting engagement with the suture wire.</p>

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat. No.	WGS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
6527785	D0188.70168US01	140-PDD-04-48	End recess to receive wire		X					14. A tool for joining a first layer of material to a second layer of material, said tool comprising: a handle; an end effector mounted on said handle and comprising: a first fixed portion defining therein a first groove defining a portion of a first channel for retaining a wire guide; a second channel extending from the first channel for supporting a suture wire extending from the wire guide; a portion of a passageway for retaining a cutting bar; and wall structure defining a portion of an end recess in a distal end of said end effector; and a second fixed portion defining therein a first groove defining a remainder of the first channel; a second groove defining a remainder of said passageway; a wall portion defining a remainder of said second channel; and a sidewall for defining a remainder of the end recess; said second channel being curved to impart a looping configuration to portions of the suture wire passed therethrough; the end recess being defined in part by a curved surface in said end effector defining a bottom of the end recess, such that the end recess is adapted to receive the looped suture wire emerged from said second channel; a wire advancing actuator mounted on said handle for moving the suture wire through said second channel and through the material first and second layers; and a wire cutting actuator mounted on said handle for moving the cutting bar into cutting engagement with the suture wire.
10/378805	D0188.70168US02	140-PDD-04-48-CON	End recess to receive wire Wire moves away from distal end along a curved trajectory	X	X			X	X	27. A suturing instrument comprising: a handle; a shaft extending from the handle and having a proximal end and a distal end including an opening and a recessed portion at an end face of the distal end; a first channel adapted to guide a suture wire in movement toward the opening; a second channel extending from the first channel and shaped to impart a curvature to the suture wire as the suture wire moves in the second channel, the second channel communicating with the opening; a cutter adapted to cut the suture wire; and a wire drive adapted to move the suture wire in the second channel; wherein suture wire upon passing through the opening in the distal end is initially directed away from the distal the end and follows a curved trajectory to return to the distal end and be received in the recessed portion.

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat. No.	WGS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
10/378805	D0188.70168US02	140-PDD-04-48-CON	End recess to receive pliable surface Drive causes wire to puncture tissue		X	X		X	X	52. A suturing instrument comprising: a handle; a shaft extending from the handle and having a proximal end and a distal end including an opening and a recessed portion at an end face of the distal end; a first channel adapted to guide a suture wire in movement toward the opening; a second channel extending from the first channel and shaped to impart a curvature to the suture wire as the suture wire moves in the second channel, the second channel communicating with the opening; a cutter connected to the instrument and adapted to cut the suture wire; and a wire drive adapted to move the suture wire in the first channel and in the second channel; wherein the distal end is positionable against a pliable surface so that a portion of the surface is received in the recessed portion, and suture wire passing through the opening penetrates the surface and forms a wire loop suture.
10/378805	D0188.70168US02	140-PDD-04-48-CON	Cutter w/ flexible element		X					76. A suturing instrument comprising: a handle; a shaft extending from the handle and having a proximal end and a distal end including an opening; a first channel adapted to guide a suture wire in movement toward the opening; a second channel extending from the first channel and shaped to impart a curvature to the suture wire as the suture wire moves in the second channel, the second channel communicating with the opening; a cutter including a flexible element adapted to cut the suture wire; and a wire drive adapted to move the suture wire in the second channel; wherein suture wire passing through the opening forms a wire loop suture.

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat. No.	WGS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
6663643	D0188.70170US01	140-PDD-04-50								<p>1. A suturing instrument for joining a first portion of material to a second portion of material, said suturing instrument comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a handle; an end effector mounted on said handle and defining therein: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a first channel for supporting suture wire, said first channel being curved to impart a looping configuration to portions of the suture wire passed therethrough; a second channel adapted to receive the looped suture wire emerged from said first channel; and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a passageway for supporting a cutting bar, said passageway intersecting said first channel so as to create a first island between said first channel and said passageway, and said passageway intersecting said second channel so as to create a second island between said second channel and said passageway; a wire advancing actuator mounted on said handle for moving the suture wire through said first channel, through the material first and second portions and back into said second channel; a cutting bar movably disposed in said passageway for selectively engaging the suture wire, said cutting bar being adapted to (1) cut the looped suture wire from the remaining portions of the suture wire; (2) bend the trailing end and the leading end of the looped suture wire around said first island and said second island; and (3) lift the looped suture wire over said first island and said second island; and a cutting bar actuator mounted on said handle for moving the cutting bar into engagement with the suture wire.
6663643	D0188.70170US01	140-PDD-04-50	Cartridge w/ first and second pair of diametrically opposed openings			X				<p>21. A structure for supporting suture wire during driving of the suture wire, said structure comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a first tube for closely surrounding and slidably supporting the suture wire; a first pair of diametrically opposed openings formed in said first tube for exposing the suture wire for driving, said first pair of diametrically opposed openings being sized sufficiently small so as to maintain support for the suture wire; a second tube disposed about a portion of said first tube; and a second pair of diametrically opposed openings formed in said second tube, said second pair of diametrically opposed openings being aligned with said first pair of diametrically opposed openings, and said second pair of diametrically opposed openings being sufficiently small so as to maintain support for said first tube.

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat. No.	WGS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
6663643	D0188.70170US01	140-PDD-04-50								<p>22. A method for joining a first portion of material to a second portion of material, said method comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> providing a suturing instrument comprising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a handle; an end effector mounted on said handle and defining therein: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a first channel for supporting suture wire, said first channel being curved to impart a looping configuration to portions of the suture wire passed therethrough; a second channel adapted to receive the looped suture wire emerged from said first channel; and a passageway for supporting a cutting bar, said passageway intersecting said first channel so as to create a first island between said first channel and said passageway, and said passageway intersecting said second channel so as to create a second island between said second channel and said passageway; a wire advancing actuator mounted on said handle for moving the suture wire through said first channel, through the material first and second portions and back into said second channel; a cutting bar movably disposed in said passageway for selectively engaging the suture wire, said cutting bar being adapted to (1) cut the looped suture wire from the remaining portions of the suture wire; (2) bend the trailing end and the leading end of the looped suture wire around said first island and said second island; and (3) lift the looped suture wire over said first island and said second island; and a cutting bar actuator mounted on said handle for moving the cutting bar into engagement with the suture wire; <p>positioning said end effector against at least one of the portions to be joined;</p> <p>moving the suture wire through said first channel, through the material first and second portions and back into said second channel; and</p> <p>moving the cutting bar in said passageway so as to (1) cut the looped suture wire from the remaining portions of the suture wire; (2) bend the trailing end of the looped suture wire around said first island and said second island; and (3) lift the looped suture wire over said first island and said second island.</p>

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat. No.	WGS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
10/737197	D0188.70170US02	I 40-PDD-04-50-CON								<p>1. A suturing instrument comprising: a handle; a shaft having a proximal end and a distal end with an opening, a first island and a second island; a first channel adapted to guide suture wire toward the opening and having a curved portion adapted to impart a bend to suture wire passed therethrough such that the suture wire begins to form a wire loop suture upon exiting the opening; a second channel adapted to receive suture wire after the suture wire has exited the opening; a wire drive adapted to move the suture wire in the first channel and through material to be sutured; and a cutter adapted to cut the suture wire so as to free the wire loop suture from suture wire remaining in the instrument and bend each end of the wire loop suture around one of the first island and the second island.</p>
10/737197	D0188.70170US02	I 40-PDD-04-50-CON								<p>22. A method of suturing comprising: providing a suturing instrument comprising: a handle; a shaft having a proximal end and a distal end with an opening, a first island and a second island; a first channel adapted to guide suture wire toward the opening and having a curved portion adapted to impart a bend to suture wire passed therethrough such that the suture wire begins to form a wire loop suture upon exiting the opening; a second channel adapted to receive suture wire after the suture wire has exited the opening; a wire drive adapted to move the suture wire in the first channel and through material to be sutured; and a cutter adapted to cut the suture wire so as to free the wire loop suture from suture wire remaining in the instrument and bend each end of the wire loop suture around one of the first island and the second island; positioning the distal end adjacent the material to be sutured; moving the suture wire through the first channel, through the material and back into the second channel; and moving the cutter so as to cut the suture wire to free the wire loop suture from suture wire remaining in the instrument and bend each end of the wire loop suture around one of the first island and the second island.</p>

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat. No.	WGS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
10/737197	D0188.70170US02	1 40-PDD-04-50-CON	Wire returns to distal end – method claim Bend trailing end of wire inwardly – method claim	X	X			X	X	38. A method of forming a wire loop suture, the method comprising: driving deformable suture wire through a curved portion of a first channel of a suturing instrument; bending the suture wire in the curved portion such that upon exiting a distal end of the instrument a leading end of the suture wire initially moves away from the distal end and follows a curved trajectory to return to the distal end to form the wire loop suture ; receiving the leading end in a second channel at the distal end as the suture wire returns thereto; cutting the suture wire to separate a trailing end of the wire loop suture from suture wire remaining in the suturing instrument; and bending the trailing end and the leading end inward toward a center of the wire loop suture.
6511489	D0188.70173US01	1 40-PDD-04-53	Cutter to cut, bend, and lift wire End recess to receive wire Bend trailing end of wire inwardly		X			X	X	1. A suturing instrument for joining a first portion of material to a second portion of material, said suturing instrument comprising: a handle; an end effector mounted on said handle and defining therein: a channel for supporting suture wire, said channel being curved to impart a looping configuration to portions of the suture wire passed therethrough; an end recess adapted to receive the looped suture wire emerged from said channel; and a passageway for supporting a cutting bar, said passageway intersecting said channel so as to create an island between said channel and said passageway; a wire advancing actuator mounted on said handle for moving the suture wire through said channel, through the material first and second portions and back into said end recess; a cutting bar movably disposed in said passageway for selectively engaging the suture wire, said cutting bar being adapted to (1) cut the looped suture wire from the remaining portions of the suture wire; (2) bend the trailing end of the looped suture wire around said island; and (3) lift the looped suture wire over said island; and a cutting bar actuator mounted on said handle for moving the cutting bar into engagement with the suture wire.

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat. No.	WCS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
6511489	D0188.70173US01	140-PDD-04-53	Cartridge w/ 2 pairs of diametrically opposed openings			X				23. A structure for supporting suture wire during driving of the suture wire, said structure comprising: a first tube for closely surrounding and slidably supporting the suture wire; a first pair of diametrically opposed openings formed in said first tube for exposing the suture wire for driving, said first pair of diametrically opposed openings being sized sufficiently small so as to maintain support for the suture wire; a second tube disposed about a portion of said first tube; and a second pair of diametrically opposed openings formed in said second tube, said second pair of diametrically opposed openings being aligned with said first pair of diametrically opposed openings, and said second pair of diametrically opposed openings being sufficiently small so as to maintain support for said first tube.
6511489	D0188.70173US01	140-PDD-04-53	Cutter to cut, bend, and lift wire – method claim End recess to receive wire – method claim Bend trailing end of wire inwardly – method claim		X			X	X	24. A method for joining a first portion of material to a second portion of material, said method comprising: providing a suturing instrument comprising: a handle; an end effector mounted on said handle and defining therein: a channel for supporting suture wire, said channel being curved to impart a looping configuration to portions of the suture wire passed therethrough; an end recess adapted to receive the looped suture wire emerged from said channel; and a passageway for supporting a cutting bar, said passageway intersecting said channel so as to create an island between said channel and said passageway; a wire advancing actuator mounted on said handle for moving the suture wire through said channel, through the material first and second portions and back into said end recess; a cutting bar movably disposed in said passageway for selectively engaging the suture wire, said cutting bar being adapted to (1) cut the looped suture wire from the remaining portions of the suture wire; (2) bend the trailing end of the looped suture wire around said island; and (3) lift the looped suture wire over said island; and a cutting bar actuator mounted on said handle for moving the cutting bar into engagement with the suture wire; positioning said end effector against at least one of the portions to be joined; moving the suture wire through said channel, through the material first and second portions and back into said end recess; and moving the cutting bar in said passageway so as to (1) cut the looped suture wire from the remaining portions of the suture wire; (2) bend the trailing end of the looped suture wire around said island; and (3) lift the looped suture wire over said island.

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat. No.	WCS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
6511489	D0188.70173US01	140-PDD-04-53	Cartridge w/ 2 pairs of diametrically opposed openings - method claim			X				42. A method for driving wire, said method comprising the steps of: providing a structure for supporting suture wire during driving of the suture wire, said structure comprising: a first tube for closely surrounding and slidably supporting the suture wire; a first pair of diametrically opposed openings formed in said first tube for exposing the suture wire for driving, said first pair of diametrically opposed openings being sized sufficiently small so as to maintain support for the suture wire; a second tube disposed about a portion of said first tube; and a second pair of diametrically opposed openings formed in said second tube, said second pair of diametrically opposed openings being aligned with said first pair of diametrically opposed openings, and said second pair of diametrically opposed openings being sufficiently small so as to maintain support for said first tube; and engaging the suture wire with a pair of opposing rollers, each of the opposing rollers engaging the suture wire by accessing the suture wire through one of the second pair of diametrically opposed openings and one of the first pair of diametrically opposed openings.
10/352600	D0188.70173US02	140-PDD-04-53-CON	Wire moves away from distal end Bend trailing end of wire inwardly	X	X			X	X	43. A suturing instrument comprising: a handle; a shaft extending from the handle and having a proximal end and a jawless distal end and an opening near the distal end; a first channel adapted to guide a suture wire in movement toward the distal end; a second channel adapted to receive suture wire from the first channel and shaped to impart a curvature to the suture wire as the suture wire moves in the second channel, the second channel communicating with the opening; and a wire drive adapted to move the suture wire in the second channel and away from the distal end upon exiting the opening to form a loop of suture wire, the instrument adapted to bend a trailing end of the suture wire so that a portion of the trailing end extends inwardly of the loop.

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat. No.	WGS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
10/352600	D0188.70173US02	140-PDD-04-53-CON	Protuberance extends w/in loop Drive causes wire to puncture tissue		X	X		X	X	69. A suturing instrument comprising: a handle; a shaft extending from the handle and having a proximal end and a jawless distal end, the distal end having an opening and a protuberance; a first channel adapted to guide a suture wire in movement toward the distal end; a second channel adapted to receive the suture wire from the first channel and shaped to impart a curvature to the suture wire as the suture wire moves in the second channel, the second channel being partially formed by the protuberance and communicating with the opening; a cutter adapted to cut the suture wire; and a wire drive adapted to move the suture wire in the second channel and out of the opening to puncture tissue to be sutured as the suture wire forms a loop of suture wire with the protuberance extending within loop.
10/352600	D0188.70173US02	140-PDD-04-53-CON	Cutter cuts proximal to portion of channel that deforms		X			X	X	96. A suturing instrument comprising: suture wire; a handle; a shaft extending from the handle and having a proximal end, a jawless distal end and an opening near the distal end; a first channel adapted to guide suture wire in movement toward the distal end; a second channel adapted to receive suture wire from the first channel and having a portion shaped to plastically deform the suture wire as the suture wire moves in the second channel, the second channel communicating with the opening; a cutter adapted to cut the suture wire at a location proximal to the portion of the second channel that plastically deforms the suture wire; and a wire drive adapted to move the suture wire in the second channel; wherein suture wire is plastically deformed when moved in the second channel and forms a loop of suture wire when moved out of the opening.

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat. No.	WGS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
10/396927	D0188.70175US01	140-PDD-04-55	Tapered lateral sides		X			?	X	41. A suturing instrument comprising: a handle; a shaft extending from the handle and having a proximal end and a distal end having an opening and tapered reliefs at lateral sides of the distal end ; a curved channel shaped to impart a curvature to the suture wire as the suture wire moves in the curved channel, such that after passing through the curved channel and exiting the opening, the suture wire forms a wire loop suture; a cutter adapted to cut the suture wire; and a wire drive adapted to move the suture wire in the curved channel; wherein the tapered reliefs at lateral sides of the distal end are adapted to closely fit a pliable surface to be sutured without the surface being pierced by the distal end.
10/396927	D0188.70175US01	140-PDD-04-55	Lateral recess to allow passage of loop		X			?	X	64. A suturing instrument comprising: a handle; a shaft extending from the handle and having a proximal end and a distal end with an opening and a recess that extends laterally from a lateral surface of the shaft toward a central portion of the shaft ; a curved channel shaped to impart a curvature to the suture wire as the suture wire moves in the curved channel, such that after passing through the curved channel and exiting the opening, the suture wire forms a wire loop suture; a cutter adapted to cut the suture wire; and a wire drive adapted to move the suture wire in the curved channel; wherein the recess is arranged to allow passage of the formed wire loop suture from the instrument in a direction lateral to the shaft .
10/396927	D0188.70175US01	140-PDD-04-55	Cutter that cuts and ejects		X			X	X	85. A suturing instrument comprising: a handle; a shaft extending from the handle and having a proximal end and a distal end with an opening; a curved channel adapted to impart curvature to suture wire passing therethrough, such that the suture wire forms a wire loop suture after exiting the opening; a wire drive adapted to move the suture wire in the curved channel; and a cutter having a first surface adapted to cut the suture wire to free the wire loop suture from suture wire remaining in the instrument and a second surface adapted to eject the wire loop suture from the instrument .

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat. No.	WGS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
10/396927	D0188.70175US01	140-PDD-04-55	Tapered lateral sides – method claim Drive causes wire to puncture tissue – method claim		X	X		?	X	90. A method of forming a wire loop suture, the method comprising: engaging tapered sides near a distal end of a surgical instrument with a pliable surface to be sutured without piercing the surface with the distal end; driving deformable suture wire through a curved channel in the suturing instrument; bending the suture wire in the curved channel such that, upon exiting the distal end, the suture wire penetrates the pliable surface and begins to form the wire loop suture; forming the wire loop suture; and cutting the suture wire to free the wire loop suture from suture wire in the instrument.
10/396927	D0188.70175US01	140-PDD-04-55	Lateral recess to receive pliable surface – method claim		X			?	X	91. A method of forming a wire loop suture, the method comprising: positioning a distal end of a suturing instrument against a pliable surface to be sutured; receiving, within a recess on a lateral surface of the distal end of the instrument, at least a portion of the pliable surface to be sutured; driving deformable suture wire through a curved channel in the suturing instrument; bending the suture wire in the curved channel such that, upon exiting the distal end, the suture wire begins to form the wire loop suture; and cutting the suture wire to free the wire loop suture from suture wire in the instrument.
10/396927	D0188.70175US01	140-PDD-04-55	End recess to receive wire – method claim Wire moves away from distal end along a curved trajectory– method claim	X	X			?	X	92. A method of forming a wire loop suture, the method comprising: driving deformable suture wire through a curved channel in a suturing instrument; bending the suture wire in the curved channel such that upon exiting a distal end of the instrument the suture wire initially moves away from the distal end and follows a curved trajectory to return to the distal end to form the wire loop suture; receiving the suture wire in a recessed portion at the distal end as the suture wire returns thereto; and cutting the suture wire to free the wire loop suture from suture wire remaining in the instrument.
10/396927	D0188.70175US01	140-PDD-04-55	Bend trailing end of wire inwardly – method claim		X			X	X	93. A method of forming a wire loop suture, the method comprising: driving deformable suture wire through a curved channel in the suturing instrument; bending the suture wire in the curved channel such that after exiting the instrument, the suture wire forms the wire loop suture; cutting the suture wire to free the wire loop suture from suture wire remaining in the instrument; and bending a trailing end of the wire loop suture inward toward a center of the wire loop suture.

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat. No.	WGS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
10/396927	D0188.70175US01	140-PDD-04-55	End recess to receive wire - method claim Release wire in a lateral direction - method claim Wire moves away from distal end along a curved trajectory--method claim	X	X			?	X	94. A method of forming a wire loop suture, the method comprising: driving deformable suture wire through a curved channel in a suturing instrument; bending the suture wire in the curved channel such that upon exiting a distal end of the instrument the suture wire initially moves away from the distal end and follows a curved trajectory to return to the distal end to form the wire loop suture; receiving the suture wire in a recessed portion at the distal end as the suture wire returns thereto; cutting the suture wire to free the wire loop suture from the instrument; and releasing the formed wire loop suture from the instrument in a direction lateral to the curved channel.
10/396927	D0188.70175US01	140-PDD-04-55	Cutter that cuts and ejects - method claim		X			X	X	95. A method of forming a wire loop suture, the method comprising: bending suture wire in a curved channel such that after exiting the channel, the suture wire forms the wire loop suture; cutting the wire loop suture from the suture wire with a first surface of a cutter; and ejecting the wire loop suture from the channel with a second surface of the cutter.
10/440805	D0188.70180US00	140-PDD-04-60	Lever doesn't move wire drive for a portion of lever's motion				X	X	X	112. A suturing instrument comprising: a handle; a lever movably mounted to the handle; a shaft extending from the handle and having a proximal end and a distal end including an opening; a first channel adapted to guide a suture wire in movement toward the opening; a second channel extending from the first channel and shaped to impart a curvature to the suture wire as the suture wire moves in the second channel; a cutter adapted to cut the suture wire; and a wire drive adapted to move the suture wire in the second channel; wherein suture wire, when moved out of the opening, forms a wire loop suture, wherein movement of the lever in a first direction actuates the wire drive to move the suture wire in the second channel, and wherein the lever is linked to the wire drive so that the lever is also movable in the first direction without actuating the wire drive to move the suture wire.

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat. No.	WGS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
10/440805	D0188.70180US00	140-PDD-04-60	Complete loop formation with complete movement of lever				X	X	X	<p>144. A suturing instrument comprising: a handle; a lever movably mounted to the handle; a shaft extending from the handle and having a proximal end and a distal end including an opening; a first channel adapted to guide a suture wire in movement toward the opening; a second channel extending from the first channel and shaped to impart a curvature to the suture wire as the suture wire moves in the second channel; a cutter adapted to cut the suture wire; and a wire drive adapted to move the suture wire in the second channel; wherein suture wire moved out of the opening forms a wire loop suture, and wherein movement of the lever through a range of motion in a first direction actuates the wire drive to move the suture wire in the second channel and actuates the cutter to cut the suture wire such that one complete wire loop suture is formed and cut from suture wire remaining attached to the instrument.</p>
10/440805	D0188.70180US00	140-PDD-04-60	Drive adjacent to distal end			X			X	<p>46. A suturing instrument comprising: a handle; a shaft extending from the handle and having a proximal end and a distal end including an opening; a first channel adapted to guide a suture wire in movement toward the opening; a second channel extending from the first channel and shaped to impart a curvature to the suture wire as the suture wire moves in the second channel; a cutter adapted to cut the suture wire; and a wire drive located near the distal end of the shaft that is adapted to engage with and move the suture wire in the second channel; wherein the suture wire forms a wire loop suture when moved out of the opening.</p>

Salute Claim Coverage

App. / Pat. No.	WGS Ref	DVL Ref	Claim Summary	All	Tip	Drive	Handle	Reusable	Disposable	Claim
10/440805	D0188.70180US00	140-PDD-04-60	Cam & cam follower wire drive			X			X	<p>79. A suturing instrument comprising: a handle; a shaft extending from the handle and having a proximal end and a distal end including an opening; a first channel adapted to guide a suture wire in movement toward the opening; a second channel extending from the first channel and shaped to impart a curvature to the suture wire as the suture wire moves in the second channel; a cutter adapted to cut the suture wire; and a wire drive including a cam and a cam follower arranged to cooperate to engage the suture wire, to move in a first direction to move the suture wire in the second channel, and to move in a second direction opposite the first direction, a portion of the wire drive biased toward engagement with the suture wire during movement in the second direction; wherein the suture wire, when moved out of the opening, forms a wire loop suture.</p>